

"Brother East and Brother West"

A Searchlight on the Unemployed

Leighton Leigh

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“BROTHER EAST AND
BROTHER WEST”

SEVEN YEARS' HARD.

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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN.

“BROTHER EAST AND BROTHER WEST”

A Searchlight on the Unemployed

BY
LEIGHTON LEIGH



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1905

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I

“NO WORK ! IMBECILITY !”

STATESMAN, philanthropist, sociologist, each big brain in the country, is at this moment being racked in an attempt to solve the problem of the moment.

What we are to do with the Unemployed.

And because the Brains are so big, it is left to the Duffer to discover that the problem does not exist.

“No work ! Imbecility !”

There is work waiting to be done north, south, east and west, spring, summer, autumn and winter, in town, country, suburb and slum ; work for man, woman, boy and girl ; work for the skilled, the unskilled, the genius, the simpleton.

It is the Worker not the Work that is wanting, when it is manual labour that is in question, and no one knows this better than the Worker himself.

When I was in Cheshire the other day, a man shouted out at me :

“Look here ! I’m shutting up my dairy-farm which has been handed down in my family, from father to son, for five generations !

“It means ruin to me and my wife, and as for my son, that jolly little chap in knickers over there, I’m ashamed to look him in the face, for I’ve forfeited his heritage, the bequest which my father received from his father, and

which he gave me in trust under the belief that I should hand it on to my son, who would in turn give it to his son.

"Well, I'm giving up my farm because I can't find labour. I've been my own first labouring man for years. Now I give in.

"The wages I give are equal to 18s. 9d. a week, which is the average wage of the agricultural labourer in the county of Cheshire. The average in county Mayo, Ireland, is 8s. 9d. a week, so I'm told. Well, I've been all over the county with those wages in my hand and I can get no one to take it because they all prefer to march to London with the Unemployed. I meant to make another attempt this season, but I heard in November of last year, 1904, that the Cheshire Rural District Council were doing their best to get men and couldn't, and where they fail, with their opportunities and their means of advertisement, it's not likely I should succeed. They advertise that there are thousands wanted, thousands—teamsters, ploughmen, dairy men, milkmaids, and the lot of them. They offer work and they offer wage, and you fools in London moan and groan and say, 'What's to be done about these poor Unemployed who are trooping up from the agricultural districts? Who will find bread for the Unemployed?'

"It's the same at our Liverpool Docks; the Board of Guardians have been saying that work is so plentiful at those docks, that employers were offering a bonus in addition to the usual wage, and yet they couldn't get men.

"Well, I give in; I'm five-and-forty years of age, I'm not a young fellow, and I'm off to Canada. I've been an independent landowner all my life, ever since my father was gored by a bull when I was a lad of nineteen. A gentleman-farmer they call me here. It's been little of the gentleman for a good many years, but I don't know that that's been my fault. The word itself is a reproach now

it seems to me among your London men, but in Cheshire it only means we've held the same land from anything between two centuries and four, that our fathers have seen that we were well educated, and that we've performed the same duty by our sons; and it means that we've ruled our men wisely and well, and kept them with us for one generation after another till to-day. It's only that and a few things more like it that we mean by gentleman-farmer here, it doesn't mean that we keep our hands white and ride about on thoroughbreds watching our men do the work.

“Now, I'm off to Canada, and they won't want me there and I shan't want them. Who does want to go to Canada when he's five-and-forty years of age?”

“So I'd wound up my affairs, and I'd wiped my wife's eyes, and I'd said good-bye to the old folks, and I'd taken steerage passages for myself and my family, and I'd resigned myself to my fate. By Heaven, it was a hard thing to do, but I'd done it, I'd done it . . . I'd resigned myself to my fate.

“Well, now, look there! You man from London, you curse of your country, look there!”

And my Cheshire friend flung abroad before me a sheet asking for his subscription towards the expense of sending three hundred Cheshire men to join an army of Unemployed who were marching on the Metropolis.

“If you cannot help us with money,” said the Whine, “prepare at least a meal of bread and cheese to assist these poor fellows on their way. Open your barns to them for the night. Give them what you can spare of clothing and foot-gear to replace those they must cast aside as useless on their march.”

“Look there!” raved the Cheshire landowner, and I cowered before him like the guilty creature he took me for. “Look there and tell me if I went up to London and told them my tale, should I find a man to listen to me? If I

went and shouted it out before your Buckingham Palace, before your House of Lords, from the Strangers' Gallery of your Commons, from the pulpit of your Saint Paul's, from the windows of your Club in Piccadilly, from the orators' tub in your Hyde Park, would one of you listen, would one of you believe? Tell me that! Wouldn't you first send me to your Police Court and afterwards to your Bedlam?

"I've had to allow my wife to do what was beyond the strength of any woman, in the effort to keep things going, because there's not a dairymaid, nor a hen-wife to be had on the whole country-side," he went on more quietly after a time. "My little Doris was not born to this kind of thing. She had a piano in her sitting-room once, but it went years ago, when I had to settle some long-standing debts and had nothing to settle them with. Her playing and singing used to be the delight of my hard-working life. I'd wait for it and listen for it all day through as I worked about the farm, and when night came and I got it, I felt I'd had my reward. Well, though, as I say, she wasn't born to it, she set to bravely when the difficulty of getting labourers grew acute. Her butter and her honey have taken prizes often at our local shows, though she got all her teaching from books, and she was a wonderful hand at bringing on an ailing lamb or calf. Then, our dairyman and his son, who had been with us for years, the last of all the men we'd ever had, left us without a word of warning after they'd drawn their wages one Saturday night, and a neighbour brought us word they'd gone to join your London Unemployed. . . . Their wages in their fists, their work waiting for them, and they with the Unemployed, while I was left alone here on this big farm as you see it. What do you say to that?

"I was busy with a sick cow I had at the time; she died, as it happened, when she needn't have died, for it was through neglect, though the fault wasn't mine. I'd got to see to other things or I'd have lost what was of more value than the cow. I put the poor beast down in the reckoning

I have against that dairyman and his son I told you of, and if there's justice above us, they'll have to pay that reckoning some day.

“As I said, I was busy with my cow, and the wife was alone in her dairy. She'd been turning the churn from five o'clock that morning, poor little thing. Of course you daren't leave off once you've begun to churn, or your butter's spoilt. It's only one of those old-fashioned hand-churns; I've never had money to buy one of the new patent ones. Then, seeing as I didn't come to help, she began to move the heavy pails of milk about and strained herself, so the doctor said later, and she's never been the same woman since, always ailing, never altogether free from pain, though she has a brave heart and hides it from me all she can. That also goes to my dairyman's account, and I hope to Heaven he'll have to pay it some day, for my wife was the dearest little helpmate that ever breathed.

“Of course I might have got labourers if I'd applied for a cockney to one of the Boards of Guardians in London or the Mansion House Committee, or even the Charity Organisation Societies. But the experiences of some of my friends with what you are pleased to call the able-bodied inmates from your London workhouses, are not encouraging. The Poor Law Guardians do their share of the matter very well, sending the hands to us on demand with a good outfit of suitable clothes, but the men won't put their hearts into farm-work, in whatever way it may be set before them.

“It's not so much that they can't do the work, but they won't.

“I've been training men to agricultural labour all my life, but when it comes to training a cockney, I can't do it. In the first place, you can't get him up in the morning unless you go and drag him up, and you can't get him to bed at night. If he's nowhere else to go, he'll sit in your kitchen and read last week's paper again and again, wasting your fire and your candle till midnight has struck

if you don't stop him, then he sulks at you and swears as loud as he dares. It's anything rather than go to his bed and get ready for work next day.

"As for the work itself, some of them really seem to think they're sent out here for a rest-cure. Then if you set them to thresh corn, or to 'plaw an' arrer,' as they call it, they simply rebel. Of course their muscles aren't trained to it, and you can't convince them that such work becomes easier every day, though at first, I admit, it's a matter of the most unpleasant ache and pain and jar in every part of your body. But then so it would be the first time you rode in a steeplechase, or pulled a boat, or any any other form of athletic amusement.

"Then there's the beasts. Nothing will ever teach them that you with your life-long training, must know how the work among the beasts is to be done better than a man from Seven Dials; so of course they always do the animals harm in the first place and get hurt themselves in the second. I've seen a great hulking chap over six foot high, crouch in the corner of the stack-yard with my old turkey-cock spluttering and fizzling over him, and, naturally, if one of them gets kicked by a cow they leave me at once. I don't know if you've been long enough in the country to understand what a queer sort of a back-hander kick a cow gives you if you milk her in a way she doesn't like. It's something like the kick of a camel in the Egyptian desert, but I'm told by those that have tried both, that the English cow beats the Egyptian camel hollow.

"It wasn't want of a home that drove my dairyman to London either," the Cheshire man went on, "and it isn't want of a home in five cases out of six, when they say it is.

"Look at that pile of tumble-down bricks over there. Half-a-dozen years ago it was a tight and trim little home-stead. Three decent rooms and a lean-to, and an attic for storing apples above. You London people find a good deal of fault with the way we farmers house our labourers,

but we don't herd them together like pigs as you do in your East End, and the slums of your West End, too, so far as that goes.

"That cottage there had a pigsty, too, you see the remains of it, and it had a potato-patch at the back and a garden in front. Well, my plan and my father's before me, was to give that cottage almost rent free to whoever was the dairyman at the time, that is, we merely deducted fifteen pence from the weekly wages for it. The man had to engage to let it shelter some second worker, his wife, brother, whoever it might be, and all we asked in return, was that they should keep it water-tight between them and that they should be punctual at their work on the farm. I always looked on that cottage as the best investment I'd got. Being on the spot, I could get the men into the milking-shed in decent time in the morning, and there was someone at hand when I was up with a sick beast in the night. That's a matter you always lose sight of when you talk of your farmer, he's up in the night with his beasts as often as a city doctor at some seasons of the year, and do what you will, you can't get a farm-hand to leave his bed at night, not if he's a London man. You can't shame him to it either, even if he knows you're up all the dark hours through yourself, and that you must be the first to be about in the morning if anything is to be done at all.

"Well, as I said, that cottage used to be a tight and trim little dwelling-place, but my dairyman never took a mite of interest in it. There was stone to be had from my bit of a quarry and straw for the thatch in the barn, and withes down by the brook, everything you want to keep a place like that in repair, but never an hour would Mr. Dairyman spend on it. I gave him a free afternoon for it once or twice, but nothing was done; then I tried to shame him by mending one hole in the thatch myself and telling him to do the rest, but he wasn't to be shamed.

"It was a good cottage as things go in the country, though it didn't contain a billiard-room and conservatory, which, from what I hear, people seem to think now that farmers ought to provide for their labourers. We farmers only live in four-roomed residences ourselves for the most part; I've no more than four private rooms in this house of mine, big as it is. The best room in the house is the kitchen, where from time immemorial we masters and our men dined together. My father never dropped the custom, nor did I, till my men dropped me. Four private rooms, and the rest is taken up with store-chambers, offices, still-room, dairy, and the rest.

"My dairyman had no bathroom in his cottage either, though he was always welcome to a can of hot water from the boiler. Did you hear how Lord Lereson built a bathroom to each of his new cottages, and when he paid his visit of inspection six months later, he found the baths had all been put in the backyards to serve as rabbit-hutches?

"Well, my man wouldn't mend the walls of his sty, so his pigs were all over the place, and I had to stop him keeping them. Of course, that was tyranny. Then he ate up all the seed-potatoes I gave him, finding it less trouble to steal mine than to plant for himself. In the end he took to sleeping in the barn without my knowledge, because the rain came through his roof in half-a-dozen places at once through his neglect. Now, if you've seen anything of country-side life, you know that the man who sleeps in the barn smokes in the barn, and the man who smokes in the barn sets fire to the barn, so in the end my dairyman set my barn a-light. He made me believe at first it was a tramp that did it. It was a mere accident that told me the truth. You see those blackened timbers, they may fall on my head or on my boy's head at any moment when we go in. The place has never been safe since my dairyman turned it into his smoking room, and it will want

a matter of fifty pounds at least spending on it before it will ever be safe again, and your Cheshire farmer hasn't got fifty pounds to spend. That's sleeping in a barn, and some of your social agitators, who don't know a cornstalk from a mushroom, are railing at us as selfish brutes, because we won't let their precious Unemployed sleep and smoke in our haylofts and barns.

"Now, my gentleman had earned his discharge again and again, as you must be saying to yourself, but I daren't discharge him, and he knew it, because he and his son were the only free able-bodied men in these parts who hadn't gone to London to join the Unemployed.

"When you get back to your London," my Cheshire friend went on, "you'll say that I prove no rule, that I'm an exception. Well, I'm no exception. There are scores and hundreds of us in these counties bordering on Wales, and I make no doubt there are thousands upon thousands of us, if you count the country through. I challenge you to show me a score who wouldn't tell you some such tale as mine, if they farmed their own land and lived by it, if they were like me with no money for modern machinery, and without a private fortune or other means to back them up. It's a different thing if you're one of the young fellows of two-and-twenty, fresh from the agricultural colleges, but they haven't had time to prove if they'll succeed better than us or not.

"Of course, if you're a tenant-farmer in these parts on the Duke of Westminster's estates or the Duke of Devonshire's, you're in a different position. Though even then you're often in a bad way enough, still you often get help to tide you over a bad season, or the loan of new machinery or something to assist you to buy new machinery for yourself; but this country isn't made up of dukes, it's made up of men like me, and it ought to be made up of men like me."

With that this gentleman farmer fiercely turned his back

upon me and stood looking at the rough white walls with their bars of black oak, which had sheltered him and his for centuries.

Next he looked at that mighty barn, built of cyclopean stones, measuring close on three feet whichever way you took them, a barn that may have stood centuries before the homestead, old as it was, was raised from the ground, and where hay and corn and fodder for man and beast had never been wanting till now, either for the lords of the soil or for those who drove the ploughshare under them.

Then he turned to the ruined pigsties and cow-byres ; an old sow pushed her way through the crumbling walls of one as he looked, and for once he did not leave his place to drive her back. A new-born calf shivered in one corner of the byre while the wind whistled through the gap in the wall above its head, and for once the master did not bear the weakly thing in his arms to the corner by the kitchen fire. A great mastiff, the policeman of the country-side, pawed at the loosened bricks of his kennel, preparing for himself a worse night than the last when next the rain should come down. The rotten thatch on that stable would be little protection when that same rain should fall, for the stout little cob who used to so cheerily rattle the butter and the Cheddar to the neighbouring town on market-day.

Last time I passed this way, my friend, the gentleman-farmer, was on a ladder repairing that thatch with his own hands, and his wife, a pretty, slender creature with a wistful look in her great dark eyes, was handing him up straw and withes for his work with one hand, while she held an ailing babe to her breast with the other.

Save these two, the gaffer and his lady, I saw no other labourers on the farm, yet all that needed doing could have been done by you or me, by unskilled labour. By Unskilled Labour ! Good Lord ! Good Lord !

Then I turned hastily away, for in the distance I heard a long-drawn whine and the tramp of many feet.

It was the agriculturist on his way to London, and as he marched he drawled out his chant :

" We've got no work to do, No work to do ! "

I did not see my friend again, but next day I looked in the paper to ascertain if there were any news of him, for the look in his eyes when I left him, was that of a man who kills his wife and child and cuts his own throat as soon as the sun has gone down.

II

“THE GENTLEMAN SINGING HYMNS DOWN THE STREET”

“Do you see that gentleman singing hymns down the middle of the street there, sir?” remarked a young builder, whom I include among my friends. “Well, he’s one of my men, a gas-fitter he is, and he lost me one of the best customers I ever had down in Montrose Square. He came late to his work on the day I engaged him, so I missed seeing him. Then, as I wasn’t there to watch him, he went out and got himself half drunk, so forgot to turn off the gas while he was at work, and set the whole place ablaze. I heard later he’d served a friend of mine the same trick the year before. They tried to make me responsible for the fire, and what with being heckled by the Insurance Company, and slanged by my employer, and giving evidence in Court, and loss of time and custom, I began the new year thirty pounds in debt, and I’ve hardly cleared it off yet. So that’s what I owe to the gentleman singing hymns down the street.

“Ah, he’s seen me, that’s why he’s turning off to the left, and there’s the fourth person who’s given him money while I’ve been talking to you, sir, three ladies and one man, and you’d have thought the man would have had more sense. He’s doing better business to-day than when he was plumbing for me, and he’s learning a useful lesson

to-day, too. You may make sure that man will never do a good day's work in his life again, not after the experience he's having over there. You teach these fellows many more lessons than you're aware of, sir, and one is that it's not only pleasanter but far more profitable to earn your living by singing hymns in the gutter, than by working at your own trade. I read in my paper last night that a man named Thomas Smyth had been indicted at the Naas Assizes. He wore a placard on his breast announcing that he was deaf and dumb, and they said in Court that his takings averaged five guineas a week. The police found means to make him hear and speak, and he got twelve months' Hard. Half-a-dozen years ago I wouldn't have believed that story, sir, even though I'd read it in the papers; now I do believe it, and could cap it with many another like it."

A few pages from the diary of the builder, whose words are quoted here, would make an interesting record.

He and his brother are in business together, and they are as hard-working and manly young fellows as one might wish to see.

The one is a painter, the other a paperhanger. They are fairly clever with both brain and finger, and they do what work they can on their little contracts with their own hands, supplementing their labour by that of so-called skilled experts.

Having no capital and working in a small way, they are unable to employ their men in and out of season, as do the princes of the building trade. Their method is simple: if they require a carpenter or a plumber on Tuesday, they look through the columns of a paper during their dinner-hour on Monday, see who wants employment, and when their own work is done, one of the brothers runs over on the bike they share in common to the address named and secures his man.

The young fellows are kindly, and always give prefer-

ence, if they can, to one who has been long out of work or who has a room full of babies at home.

Their experience is worthy of recapitulation, for it is such as they who might solve the question of the Unemployed, without reference to Parliament and State Commissions, if the Unemployed would play their side of the game fair and square.

"You'd be surprised, sir," said one of the brothers, "how independent these men become the moment you engage them, even if they've been earning nothing for weeks. They must have their elevenpence an hour and their time and a-half for extra, though they know you are making very little indeed out of the job yourself. They always say it's the Union that obliges them to do this, but in practice the Union never concerns itself with men in a small way like my brother and me.

"Then the hard part is, you have to pay them full wage and full time whether their work's bad or good, whether they work slow or fast, whether they're sober or half drunk.

"Some time ago I was at work in a house and the gentleman told me he'd give me five shillings for altering the hang of a casement window. There was nothing to pay for materials, and I thought the carpenter would take three hours for his part of the work, then I'd touch it up myself and get a fair profit. I told the man what was wanted, and engaged him over night for ten o'clock; then, so that he might make a fair start, I took the hinges off the window myself next morning.

"Ten, eleven and twelve o'clock struck and still the man hadn't turned up, and the gentleman slanged me, as he had a right to, for letting all the cold air into the house on a winter's morning. At quarter past twelve my carpenter came, but hadn't brought his tools. He said he thought he'd like to have a look at the job first to see what was wanted.

"He didn't come back till half-past one, as he said he'd

had to get his dinner. I started him at his work and helped him at it for ten minutes ; then I went down the street to another job. About two hours later I went back to the window. The man had broken a pane of glass and snapped one of the hinges in two, good, strong old-fashioned hinges they were, not such as they make now. Well, my man didn't go out and get another pair, but sat there kicking his heels for half an hour, waiting for me to know what he was to do about it. I should have had to put the things broken in at my own expense, but the gentleman of the house saw how it was and paid me for them. I stopped on by the man after that, and lost over an hour of my time watching him, but he'd knocked the window about so badly before I came to him that I was at it for an hour with putty and paint before I put it right. I didn't make much on that job.

"Next day I engaged a gas-fitter to stop an escape at the same house. He came in three-quarters of an hour late, and made me miss an appointment, which put out my work for the day, and got me into trouble with another of my gentlemen, too. I told him I should want to see his work before he covered it up, and gave him something to be going on with in case I was kept.

"Well, he didn't hear my instructions, or didn't want to hear them, and when I went back he'd got the boards and the carpet all nailed down. Just to make sure, I asked him what he'd soldered up with, and found he'd stopped his gas leak with putty, which would probably have meant an explosion and half a dozen lives lost before this year was out, if I hadn't put the question. Of course the boards had to come up again. Then five o'clock came, and he wouldn't stop an extra half-hour to finish, so I had to get him again next day. I didn't get much on that job.

"I had to put in a new scullery window in the same house. I had the frame ready, so it was a simple bit of

work, and I could have done it myself but I was due down in the City about some drain-pipes, so I had to get a plasterer, a carpenter and a glazier for the job. Each one came late, and as I wasn't there to watch them they tumbled over each other's heels. They were to have taken up the work each one from the other, of course, but they all went over to the Pub once or twice before they finished, which they never fail to do if there's no employer or foreman present, consequently they did their work so badly that I spent the greater part of the next day putting it right before the gentleman was satisfied. I didn't make much on that job.

"It's not often I get off with less than a twelve-hours' day myself, nor does any builder who's on his own, whether he's a small man like me or a big one. The men we employ work eight hours ; if they consent to do more, its overtime and paid extra. If you're a man in a small way you have to think twice before you arrange for overtime, for it's a costly matter, and we employers have our accounts and estimates to make out after the other work's done. Then we go home and read in the paper about the Unemployed. It's sickening !

"I've paid away fifteen pounds this winter in wages to carpenters alone, which is a good deal for a man in a small way like myself, and I've never been able to employ the same man twice, not twice ; yet looking for another often sends me all Saturday afternoon racing over the town on my bike. What do you think of that, sir ?

"If I might make so bold as to say so, sir, you gentlemen don't know how to deal with men like that plumber. When you arrange your Commissions you should put someone on it that understands him and the likes of him.

"First you should get some two or three good sound working men, men that have been with the same firm a dozen years, and who know how much their masters have

lost on their contracts through not having been able to get men when they wanted them. Maybe you'd think them a bit prejudiced at first, for there's no one in the world despises men like that plumber so much as a good, sound working man, but they'd tell your Committee a few things that would astonish them.

"Then you should have a small builder and a big builder, a small shopkeeper and a big shopkeeper, and a small landed proprietor and a big landed proprietor. It wouldn't do your Committee any harm neither if you put on it a man who'd been in the police force for a score of years, some one who'd got his pension and good-conduct hadge, for he'd know what he was talking about. To finish up with, it wouldn't come amiss if you made room on the Board for a medical man who lived in a small way, and who worked chiefly among the poor, and if you got one of the ministers who'd spent his life down at the Docks, I wouldn't ask if he was Priest, Parson or Methodist. It seems to me they're all good alike down there, and that's very good. Well, if you'd got all them on your Board, why you'd have made a fair start.

"And by your leave, sir, we wouldn't have one of the Labour Members on the Commission. Your Labour M.P.s have abused the grandest opportunity that men of that kind ever had since the world began, and they've done more harm to the working class by misrepresenting them in the House, than they'll ever live to undo. When I was a lad of eighteen I worshipped the very name of the Labour Leaders ; I'd have left my work and gone round the world for them. But they've cured me of that. They've talked to me in private and they've talked to me from a tub in Hyde Park, and it seems to me they give all their time to interfering with what doesn't concern the artisan at all, and that they're all for opposition of any sort whatever, instead of thinking how they could best further the working man's interests. But they'll find out their mis-

take. I used to be a Rad., and I wanted to be a Rad., and it seemed to me that the small employers were all meant by nature to be Rads., but now they're Conservatives to a man, and it's more through those Labour Leaders than anything else. What finished us all was when we found the Labour Leaders, the men we'd elected ourselves and had sworn by, were supporting the Unemployed Bill in the form in which it was first put up, and that they were against the Pauper Immigration Bill. That finished us, and now I'll finish myself, for I reckon I've tired you out.

"By the way, I'm not a Salvationist, sir, and I'm not a politician, but it seems to me that if a Labour Department were established in the Government, with General Booth at its head, we might do very well. I ~~don't~~ know nothing about him but what I've read in the papers, but the General seems to me to have a better eye for the man who says he wants work but doesn't want it, and for the man who wants weeding out and setting aside, so as not to spoil life for the rest, than anyone I've ever heard of."

III

“IT'S ONLY THE GOOD-FOR-NOTHING WE
DISCHARGE IN WINTER.”

THUS the Small Builder and the Big Builder is like unto him.

“I am very sorry, Mr. Mason, but your estimate for the new conservatory is considerably beyond what I think it right for me to spend, so I shall give up the idea. It was a fancy of my wife's which I should have been glad to gratify if I could, but we have decided to do without it.”

“If we took five pounds off, sir, would that meet your views?”

“No, you mustn't try to tempt me, I've given the thing up.”

“I shall be sorry if you do that, sir. Will you let us have the job if I take off one-third the proposed price. That will leave us no profit whatever, but just pay for the labour and material.”

“But I shouldn't care for your firm to work for me for nothing.”

“Oh, that's all right, sir. This is a bad season; no one in the building line is doing anything at present, and we want some work just to keep our men together, even if we lose on it. You can't always be at their backs, and they're making a job we've got on at Campden Hill drag

on from day to day, just because they know we've got nothing else coming on."

"But why do you tell them?"

"We don't, sir, but they always find it out."

"Well, I'll think about the conservatory and talk to you again about it later on, perhaps about Easter of next year."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but if you wanted us to do it then, we should have to charge you double the price I am asking you now for a mid-winter job, when you can get the work done by the best men we employ and at a nominal price. You see from the spring onward we can't get our contracts through fast enough. The men know that and they ask any terms they like, so they have their knife into us then too. The only ones we can depend on are those we've kept on eating their heads off all the winter. When things are at high pressure, we're all of us obliged to take on a lot of shiftless, idle, drunken fellows, anything to get the work through, even if a great part of it has to be touched up again by our regular workers."

"Of course at the end of the season, sir, we discharge all the good-for-nothings. It's these who come whining to you all the winter, telling you how hardly they have been used, but any master-builder and any honest workman would tell you their employers would have been only too glad to keep them on, if they'd been worth their salt. Just you take that in, sir, we wouldn't have sent off one of them that was worth his salt."

"That's interesting to hear. I'll mention these facts, if you've no objection, to a friend of mine who's on a Committee for the Unemployed."

"I don't mind if you do, sir. It's what we call a trade secret, but most of us are coming to think it would be just as well if you gentlemen who go in for the unemployed question knew something about it. These fellows presume on your ignorance, they know they can tell you anything

they like because you've had no opportunity of finding out the truth."

"I'm afraid you haven't a very high opinion of the lower class of working man."

"Well, sir, I can't think as well of him as I should like to! He doesn't act as fairly by his employer as his employer acts by him, and that's a fact. When you see one builder after another, men that you have a respect and liking for, even though they're your rivals in the trade, driven into the Bankruptcy Court through not being able to carry out their contracts, and when you know it's through their men's actions, nothing in this world else, what are you to think? Such employers as I'm speaking of have talent, training, industry, energy, and business-like habits, but they're driven direct to this court by their men and it's not only we that says it, every one in the trade knows that it is so.

"Of course foreign competition gets keener every year and the price of building materials goes up every year, and the fear of having bad wood-work and metal-work foisted off on you by the makers, is a danger that those before us never had to contend with in the same degree as we have now. Well, we could face all that, but when it comes to living with the fear of a strike always before your eyes as well, and seeing the best men you've got turned into sulky, scowling shirks by the professional agitators, who would have to starve if they could not raise discontent, why I can tell you, sir, you feel sometimes as if you'd like to throw the whole thing up.

"Did you hear of that factory in the north, sir, where a boy of fourteen caused seven thousand men to turn out? The lad was insolent to the foreman, who gave him the sack. Then the whole of the lads struck, said they'd listen to no terms till the young scoundrel was taken back. It was a trade at which the men couldn't work without the boys, so the men struck too. Seven thousand men out

and the works closed before night, and all because a young snip of fourteen couldn't keep a civil tongue in his head, and because the law wouldn't allow the foreman to give him the hiding he deserved, and send him back to his work, instead of turning him off. They say it was a sight to see the men march out of those factories, laughing and cracking their jokes as cheerful as might be, all through having an excuse to leave off work in the middle of the week, for that is what it came to, and for anything they knew it might have led to their employers going into bankruptcy and the works permanently closed, but much they cared for that !

"That kind of thing, or the risk of it, goes on all over the country, though it doesn't often get into the papers, and it's a difficult thing to fight.

"In my own trade now, I've known foremen afraid to enter a man as late in the morning, and afraid to call the men up till the dinner-hour had got to be an hour and a quarter, and turning a blind eye when a man came half drunk to his work, all because they didn't know what would happen if they were as strict as they ought to be.

"They behave better with us than with some, because they know our position's good, but the moment a firm, even a high class firm, is a bit shaky, or they believe it's a bit shaky, or worst of all, if they get an idea they have the power to make it a bit shaky, they think themselves masters and they let you know it. They know they won't lose much anyhow, for the ranks of the unemployed are always open to the man who throws up his work.

"As for the small builders, things are cruelly hard on them, yet they're often as good men as we are, as clever, and as well educated ; it's only the capital they're without. Of course, sir, their little bits of contracts running from five to fifteen pounds, are as much to them as those we sign for a thousand.

"Well, a man that they've been good to all the winter

perhaps, guaranteeing him to their clients and getting him jobs of window cleaning and so on when there was nothing else to be had, will leave them in the middle of the week in the good seasons of the year, just because he's found someone else who will give him a halfpenny an hour more, and probably only for a fortnight's shift.

"They've no shame, fellows like that; when the fortnight's over, they'll go back to their employer, after perhaps getting him fined on his contract and making him lose a client. They'll expect to get taken on again, and they'll *get* taken on again too in most cases, for these small men, builders' gardeners, or whatever they may be, are cruelly hard put to it for men as a rule, and yet it's only the name of being a small builder, for however small their profits may be, they have to pay their hands just the same as we do unless in cases that for some reason are an exception.

"Another thing about the working-man," the builder went on, "is that in the present day he seems to have no ambition. Things have been made too pleasant for him. He doesn't want to rise. He wants higher wages and he wants less work, but he doesn't want promotion.

"Now our firm was founded by my grandfather, and in his day and my father's, every man in the trade worth his salt, set his heart on becoming a master-builder. Of course he didn't always get to it, but he tried to.

"My grandfather, and I'm not ashamed to say it, handled a hod himself in his early days, but he determined he wouldn't call any man master a day longer than he could help, and he didn't. The pay in his time for everyone alike was fivepence or sixpence an hour, and the hours were eleven or twelve in the day, sometimes much more, and a good deal of slave-driving in those days too. Workmen hadn't the easy times then that they have now.

"However, all that didn't do them any harm so far as I can make out, and my grandfather is the finest old man of

his age, of any I know, and for all the hard work and long hours the grandfathers of some of the men in my employment now, could put their descendants to the blush so far as muscles and sinews and inches go. Well, as I was saying, the men in the present day don't *want* to rise. They see how hard any employer has to work to keep afloat. They know he sits at his desk for hours after they have gone home or to their Pub. They watch him losing on one contract most of what he made on another. They know the trouble he has had with Strikes and Trade Unions and Inspectors and Social agitators and with the Employer's Liability Act, though I'm all for that myself, and they see they're much better off as they are, so they don't want to rise.

"But that's not as it should be, as you know, sir. If once a man loses his wish to get on, he isn't half a man in any rank of life.

"Then you're sapping their independence, let me tell you that, sir. You couldn't have made a greater mistake than by giving them their children's education free. The moment they've accepted one thing they haven't earned, they are ready to grasp at another, for that's human nature all the world over, and you can't blame them for it.

"There's a man working for us now to whom we pay nearly three pounds a week for the greater part of the year, yet he lets his children be sent out of town in the summer by a Country-Holiday Fund. What do you think of that, sir? It's robbing the slum children of their rights if it's nothing else, but that sort has no shame, and he's got a half-witted brother, not far enough gone to be shut up, but he got tired of seeing him about and sent him to the workhouse. The poor fellow came and told me about it himself, and said he'd chopped the wood and cleaned the windows and shoes and minded the children and done all he could to earn his keep and make them let him stop at

home, the home that had been his own father's home before him too it was, but that was the end of it. Very rough on the poor chap, as well as an imposition on the Ratepayers.

"Some day, sir, as I see the subject interests you, I'll ask you to come over and examine our books. The money we pay out in wages would astonish you. We're in a big way as you know, and have branch works all over the country, and there are hundreds with us who earn little under £150 a year, and hundreds more that earn a clear £100. That may not sound much to you, sir, but think how little they have to do with it, for whatever they may say, rents aren't high considering all things, except in some parts of the East End. And there's hardly one among them but spends twenty-five per cent. of all he earns on his pleasures, beer and bets and tobacco. You gentlemen somehow forget when you talk of this matter, that a man's income must always be considered from the point of view as to what he spends on his pleasures. Your two thousand a year wouldn't go very far, sir, would it, if you spent £500 on drink and bets and cigarettes ?

"And of course their children are wage earners from the time they are eleven or twelve years old, and it all goes to fill the family stocking. I wish I had a little of the money they throw away to invest in my business. There's one here and there thrifty, but for the most part half of what they get is just squandered, turned to ducks and drakes. There's no working-man in the world gets so well paid, not for what he does, as the British artisan. The American is paid better, but he gets through more, his expenses are higher and the demand on his ability is greater.

"Then look at the way they work, sir ! You yourself have told me more than once that for each thing they put right in your house they put one wrong, so that each workman needs another to follow him to repair what he's damaged, and they don't care ! Each one knows we have

to pay him whether his work's bad or good. It would be amusing, if it didn't hit our pockets so hard, to see the cheek with which they look on while our clients slang us for the harm that's been done, and that they know we have to pay for.

"Of course some of them put away in the Savings Bank. I wish more of them did that, but it's the old story and the Pub gets the lion's share. Some say it's poverty drives men to drink, but for one case like that, there's a hundred, aye and five times that, in which drink drives men to poverty.

"Then the wives, sir, what are you to do when they come crying on to your doorstep on Saturday night, saying the landlord was going to turn them out and the grocer refused to send in flour and sugar till the last bill was settled, and yet you know you paid the man anything from thirty-five to forty-five shillings at noon that day?

"Of course they're not all like that, but there's a good many that are. If I had my way, no man in my employment should touch his wages till he'd shown me the receipts from his tradespeople and for the last week's rent. It sounds high-handed, but it would only be enforcing common honesty, and the whole country would be the better for it and the men themselves would be the first to feel the benefit.

"I laughed the other day when I read in the papers of a suggestion that the Free Breakfast plan should be carried out, but that no Publican should be allowed to serve a man with beer if he had accepted a Free Breakfast or any other form of Parish relief for himself or his family. You wouldn't have many applicants for Free Breakfasts if that was made law, I can tell you that, sir."

IV

“WANTED, A MAID SERVANT: BY A DESPERATE MISTRESS”

WHEN Reggie West lost all he had in that horrible Black Friday affair, everyone was more than a little sorry for him and his pretty young wife.

The Reginald Wests were of those who never touch another life, either above or below their own, without bringing a ray of sunshine to bear on it. There are a good many of those left in the world though certain sections of the Press, when news is slack, try to convince us to the contrary.

They had always entertained a good deal both at their little house in Mayfair and in that winsome bower they possessed on the Thames, so they had a larger staff of servants than is usual in those of their means.

Apart from this, they had no extravagances, and no one but their solicitor ever knew how it was that the Black Friday literally annihilated them, instead of merely giving them a bad backhander.

The solicitor happened to leave for Patagonia on the Friday night, so no explanations on his part were forthcoming.

However, the Wests had plenty of pluck, so Reggie asked the way to the City that he might see if the pass-key of Eton and Oxford would open any door to him

there. Mrs. West, who had always been noted for her dainty taste in dress, sold her wardrobe to her cousin and took a modest selection from her household gods to one of the smallest of small houses in North Kensington. One of those where you have a good view from your drawing-room window of the débris of the houses that have been built, the houses that are going to be built, and the houses that were to have been built.

She told Reggie that as the house was not very big, she could manage quite well without an attendant, especially as a little later on she meant to take a post as typist and shorthand writer.

Reggie would not hear of this, so she compromised by deciding to get a girl of sixteen to help her in her new duties. Now a girl of sixteen only counts as half an attendant, so Mrs. West almost had her own way after all.

To decide to get a girl and to get a girl are somewhat different things.

Mrs. West advertised in a local paper for a nice girl of about sixteen who had been well trained in housework.

Mrs. West got no reply.

Mrs. West advertised again, leaving out the word "nice," and making no allusion to training.

Still Mrs. West got no reply.

Mrs. West then searched a dozen papers for notices of girls of sixteen wanting places.

Mrs. West searched in vain.

Mrs. West next advertised in various larger periodicals.

A shoal of circulars from agencies and one bona-fide address was the result, but on application, she was met in the doorway with the information that the young lady had changed her mind and wasn't thinking of taking no place at all now, thank you all the same.

Mrs. West then sat down at her desk and wrote in thirty-five directions mentioning her requirements.

These letters went, among other places, to servants who had married from her house or left it when the débâcle occurred ; to provincial towns near which her own and her husband's people had property ; to various clerics in and out of the East End of London ; to public and private orphanages and philanthropic associations ; to homes for befriending young servants, and to all the places where those who feel a craving for a girl of sixteen might reasonably expect to find one.

The following were among the answers she received, the first being from a former upper housemaid who had married a footman some years before and set up a public-house in Camberwell :

"Dere Madam,—Me and Husband is sorry to here as you is so come down in the world as to want a Girl of Sixteen. Its a sad and shameful fall and we hopes you'll bare up as well as can be expected.

"We sends our Duty to you and Hopes you're sory now for the way you used to speke us when you was Crosse, likewise the Master not knowing then as Pride goes before a fall and as Providence was so soon going to prove that we was as good as you. If we didn't hate to hit them as is down, through all faulte of their own, we'd even say we is a grate deal better than you, seeing we has now fore servants under us and you can't even get a Girl of Sixteen to do your washings-up, which we hopes you don't mind doing sich yourselves but has learnt to know your place,

"Yours respectfully,

"ANNE COLE, Also WILLIAM COLE.

"P.S. There is no Girls of Sixteen in these parts. They all goes to the factories."

A second old servant, once housekeeper to the Wests, wrote :

"Dear Madam,—There's a good few girls of Sixteen about Here but they won't go to service none of them, not even to Scrub their own Mothers' floors and boil kettles was it ever so.

"Of course I tells them as Servants is as good as Missises now, except Housekeepers which isn't Servants at all, Thank Goodness and There's the Butler as hasn't always got a wife, though such young hussies needn't think he'd ever look at them. I've known them as come to a new place with two hats and another for every day and a Sunday frocke trimmed what you please, as it's all along of that there County Council, its come to them not knowing whats what and even say Miss to the Housekeeper.

"Is you too proud to ask your friends and betters to help you. That's a easy way of getting on in the world when one is Down and Rich and pore we should all remember as pride is shameful, I mean sinfull, it was my Pen what slipped.

"Me and Sam isn't above sending our duty to you even now, but we think in writing as you should have remembered to say how grateful you was to us for serving you so well. Also for seeing that all spendings was what they should have been in a house like yours, where even a Duke and a Duchess was once known to come, and never less than a pint of cream at Christmas from the milkman for the Housekeeper's room to show proper respect, and always a good Return from all Tradesmen when Bills was pade as oughter be.

"We always speaks well of you but we thinks you should have let us know how things was going, not even the wages safe and lost a chanst of £50 to all servants in my employment at time of my Deth, as is what all

Masters and Missuses as knows there Duty, writes when they feels as there End is droring near.

“Yours respectfully, I meane yours truely,

“MARY ROBINSON.”

“ST. SEBASTIAN’S VICARAGE,

“STEPNEY.

DEAR MRS. WEST,

“Even if I could get a girl to go to you from here she wouldn’t stop. I have found good homes for three or four who were living at home under the most pitiable conditions, but all came back as soon as they got their first month’s wages.

“One said she didn’t like the food! Another, whose mistress had gone to lie down with a fit of neuralgia, promptly left the house fearing she would have to ‘Nuss’ her. A third, who made no attempt to explain why she came away, had brought with her several of her employer’s sheets and tablecloths. She said she didn’t think they’d have been missed as there was such a lot about, and she thought they’d be more useful at home. Honestly, I don’t think the girl looked on the matter as a theft. Small credit to our teaching, yet we work our hardest. Come and sing to us again when you have time, it is by such voices as yours that we hope to reach the hearts of our people.

“Very truly yours,

“A. ST. ANSELM.”

“G.S.R.S.

“CHARING CROSS ROAD.

“MADAM,

“I am very sorry to say that we have no girls on our books who would suit you. Very few who come to us, will

go into service. If they do, they like to go into large houses as *Between Maids*. May I remind you that your subscription to our institution was not paid last year.

"Very truly yours,

"M. OVERSEER.

"P.S.—A girl has come in while I write and as she has just left her place, she would be willing to go to you. She squints and is slightly lame, but perhaps you would not mind that as girls are hard to get.

"It is only fair to warn you that this girl will have to go to you without a character, beyond a recommendation from this office. There is no harm in her, so far as we know, but she has a habit of running out at night, so we should expect you to keep careful watch over her. It is useless to merely lock up her hat and jacket as she would put on one of yours, if she could not get at her own. Her way is to ask to go to bed early, then to slip out later, leaving the key under the scraper or the door on the latch ready for her return. On hearing that you will make yourself responsible to us for the girl's behaviour, we will send her round to you at once. M. O."

The Matron of the Orphanage, Hammersmith, where three hundred girls, "daughters of respectable working-men," are received at the age of ten, and after six years' residence in the institution are placed in suitable positions in life, wrote as follows :

"It is with the greatest regret that I tell you I cannot induce one of the fifty girls of sixteen who are on the point of leaving us, to accept the place you offer.

"As we knew you well by name, and were convinced that a girl would have a happy home and good training with

you, we decided to make yours a test case and offered any suitable girl in our establishment a box of good clothes on leaving us and a Christmas present of one guinea for each year she might remain in your service.

"Not one, however, would give the proposal one instant's consideration.

"Our institution was founded in 1850, mainly with the idea of training the orphan daughters of the better class of working men for domestic service. During the subsequent quarter of a century, we found places for many hundreds in all households, from that of our late sovereign down to those of small tradesmen, each girl being sent to the post for which she was best fitted from her temperament, as well as her acquirements.

"The girls did well, almost without exception, and some of our most generous patrons are those who obtained what proved to be valuable and valued servants from us. Many of the servants themselves who retired on liberal pensions, on their own savings, or on marrying fellow servants of good position, have made considerable donations to the association to which they owed their well-being in life.

"Between 1870 and 1880, the numbers of those who went into service began to decrease rapidly, and now a year will go by without more than one or two leaving us for this purpose.

"All go from us fairly well trained in cooking, laundry-work and domestic employment generally, but from their youth and having little opportunity of later practice, we fear they soon forget what they have learnt.

"A point that distresses us much, is that instead of the old tie being an interest and a happiness to the girls through life, they now speedily forget their old home. In fact, after a twelvemonth or so from the time they leave, there are not more than a dozen cases in the year when our letters ever bring a reply.

"Forgive me for writing to you at such length, but this

subject lies very near my heart and I have been matron or assistant of the Orphanage for nearly fifty years.

"Truly yours,

"O. T."

"CLERGY HOUSE,

"WHITECHAPEL.

"DEAR MRS. WEST,

"So sorry but our girls don't like service.

"Literally, and not as a mere figure of speech, they would rather starve than undertake household work. If we have a girl in the parish who is too good for her surroundings or unfitted for factory life, we get her into the fever-hospital in Liverpool Road. They all like that and it is the nearest thing to service they will stand.

"Tell Mr. West how much we miss his kind subscriptions.

"Best wishes, from

"CYRIL AUGUSTINE."

"MANOR RECTORY,

"GLEBELANDS.

"DEAR MRS. WEST,

"I am extremely sorry not to be able to recommend you a girl, but we cannot even get one to help at the Rectory. They won't go anywhere except to the Aerated Bread Shops and similar places. Even when there is actual starvation under the home roof, they prefer to remain as a burden on their parents, rather than accept a good home and good wages such as you offer, and in the same breath as they refuse such a proposal, they ask us to lend them money that they may go up to London to 'better themselves.' Our position is very difficult. Mrs.

Vickary had lately a very great disappointment, she had trained the daughter of my brother's head gamekeeper, a tall, graceful, refined-looking girl of sixteen, as house-parlourmaid, and sent her to town to take up work in the house of a young married couple who were friends of our own.

"The girl was duly met by a representative of the Young Woman's Protection Society, and on the way to her new home, she asked permission to call on her aunt in Chelsea. This permission was given, and as the representative of the Y.W.P.S. had several other girls under her charge, she agreed to the request of the aunt, who seemed a nice respectable woman, to let the girl stay to tea, on the understanding that she was herself to take her on to her place before eight o'clock in the evening.

"As it happened, the girl's uncle kept a coster's barrow in King's Road, and thinking to give his niece a treat, he invited her to accompany him to his pitch for an hour, before going on to Beaumont Gardens.

"It was Saturday night, and the young girl was so delighted by the lights and noise and bustle of the costers' corner, that she proposed to her relatives to live on with them and help 'to mind the barrow.' They appear to have accepted the suggestion with alacrity.

"Now Bessie is to be seen presiding over the whelks and winkles in King's Road, and no persuasions avail to make her give up her occupation. Her aunt has half a dozen small children at home, and the whole family are crowded into two rooms along with the barrow and the shell-fish. When her professional duties are over, Bessie has to work very hard indeed to help her aunt with the children, washing and mending as well as cleaning and cooking for them. Yet she vehemently declares that she would not for anything leave her present life for that for which my wife had so long and patiently prepared her.

"The last time we approached her on the subject was on

one of the coldest mornings of the New Year. Bessie was somewhat depressed in manner, and we found she had been up the greater part of the night, taking turns with her uncle in guarding the pitch of his coster barrow. About Christmas time the pitches have to be watched all night to guard them from the 'Pitch-pirate,' who will steal up during the dark hours and push his own barrow into the place of the original one. This he thrusts out into the middle of the road, whence of course it is summarily evicted by the first passing policeman.

"In order to enable himself to protect his rights, the owner sets a little firegrate on the pavement at midnight, when his last customer has departed and he has blown out his naphtha flare. Here he periodically makes himself a cup of tea which he drinks under the tarpaulin shelter he has constructed between his own and his neighbour's barrow. Sometimes he runs across to the coffee-stall for his refreshment, but the probability is that the 'Pitch-pirate' will already have shifted his barrow before his return.

"Well, Bessie had had five hours of guarding the pitch during that bitter winter's night, after a long day's work as saleswoman. Yet she was willing to undergo it again as often as her uncle pleased, rather than enter service in a luxurious little home where two other servants were kept, and where my wife's training had fully qualified her to aspire to still better things.

"Such is Bessie and she exists in her thousands all over the country.

"Believe me, yours most truly,

"A. VICKARY."

Finally, Reggy West wrote out a form of advertisement which might possibly have found for his wife what she wanted.

Unluckily they had no funds available for inserting the notice, which ran as follows :

WANTED, A SERVANT.

BY

A DESPERATE MISTRESS.

Residence : A tiny Flat.

Rooms : Two, Cupboards for cooking, &c., three.

Cooking : Anything will Do, provided it is not bad enough to make the employers ill.

Interference : None, as the Master and Mistress are Out at Work for ten and twelve hours in the day.

No Tradesmen's bells to answer, as the employers buy in the cheapest markets as they walk back from their work and carry “the shopping” home themselves.

No Callers to whom to open the door, the owners of the flat being too poor to entertain their friends.

No carpets to shake, as there are only two small rugs in the place.

No brass to brighten. No silver teapot to polish. No stairs to sweep. No steps to clean. No kitchen fire to light. No nothing that takes time or skill to attend to.

No Laundry work to do, as the employers would not think of asking a respectable servant to demean herself by washing clothes “as looks quite clean as they is now,” when they are put into the tub.

Wages : Such as any member of the Unemployed Army should be thankful to receive.

Application : To Reggy West and his Brothers and Sisters.

Address : Anywhere and Everywhere, London, N. S. E. W.

Letter from Old Servant Number III., which arrived

after the others had been set aside. Number III. had formerly been kitchen-maid in Mrs. West's house.

"Dear Madam,—I no a nice Girl of Sixteen, and she would sute you to a T. She Would ware Caps and aprons and she can washe and scrubbe and cooke and Scoure, having Ten in the house at hoame, most of them Babbies.

"She says she don't minde what she do so she get to London. And she is very sivvil and good-tempered, which is Wot you Want, and ware black dresses if you give them her, but not to bye.

"However, Husband and me, we doant thinke we would like to recomend you to her, seeing all the Servants you have now is a Girl of 16. We've told all Friends here you has 20 Servants besides Outdoors. We thinks it our Duty to ourselves to make it no less than 20, seeing we was made and footman to you for so long.

"Please don't write us agen, as Postmen is sich a sett they might rede your leter and finde out ware you was livin now.

"Our Duty to you and the Master, and we Hope he'll do his best to earne a honest living, which better than him has been druv to before now.

"Your late

"AMELIA GIBBS."

V

“THEY'RE A BAD LOT, IS 'USBANDS”

“YES, sir,” said the little Marine Store dealer, who contrived to keep herself neat and comely despite her unsavoury surroundings. “YES, sir, we has to move pretty often, as it isn't everybody as likes our trade ; but we always keeps our store opposite a Public-house for convenience sake, as it's handy for our customers, though we're teetotalers ourselves ever since our John died of drink five years ago.

“Maggie, that's my partner, was our John's sister, and I'm his widow ; Maggie, she's a widow, too. We holds the Store between us, and we keeps ourselves to ourselves, for though we says it as shouldn't, there's lots of husbands a-waiting for us if only we'd say the word.

“Husbands,” repeated our John's widow contemptuously, and she rattled a saucepan against an oil-stove which must have changed hands very often before it came to her, “I know something about husbands if anybody does, and they're a bad lot for the most part, though I don't mean no disrespect to our John that's gone, for he was better than most when he was sober.

“Talking of husbands, there's long Ned Simmons as has two rooms and six children with his wife above our Store. Not much of a place you'd say, for a scaffold-builder that gets between two and three pounds a week

most of the year round, and more than that in busy times, for he's at Staples', the biggest builder at this side of the town. He's on the drink regular from Saturday till Tuesday each week. Not for nobody will he work on Monday, says our Scaffolder.

"Staples', they puts up with it, for, drink or no drink, Ned's one of their best men. There's not many understands his trade; it's hard to learn, so there's fewer of them every year as'll trouble to learn it. There's never been an accident caused through Ned's scaffolding yet, not even when it's up for a church steeple.

"Mr. Robinson, that's one of Staples' foremen, and one as likes his joke, he says they'll keep Ned on as long as Ned's scaffolding will keep him on, and it's a miracle that's been as long as it has, says he.

"Staples is safe on the Compensation Act, anyhow, for they'll never have to give it to Ned. He's not like some that gives trouble by being half and half about his drink, so that when there's an accident or an inquest, you don't know if there'll be Compensation or not. There's no mistake about him!

"Well," she went on, honouring me again after bargaining with a baby of four over the price of a rabbit-skin, "I was talking about Husbands, wasn't I; there's that Ned now, Friday's his day for coming to me. He's always got rid of his own money by that, and he'll bring me one of his wife's kettles or even her smoothing iron, and she a laundress for to keep a roof over her children's heads. Well, he'll bring *anything* a Friday to get hisself sixpence for some beer, and when he's got it, off to the Pub opposite before you can look round.

"I sells what he's brought me back to his wife late Saturday night when she's got some money out of his weskit pocket, and she gives me a halfpenny in the shillin' for interest. She says it comes cheaper than the pawnshop. She sometimes brings her irons here herself for me to hide

'em for her, but Ned he's that sharp, he can always find something to sell when he means to have his beer.

"Then there's Tim Blain. Those is his tools in that corner. He's had no use for 'em this six months. I've sold 'em once or twice, but they've always been brought back to me. Tim was never much of a worker, he wasn't, and I don't think it was his crooked leg as was as much to blame as always gettin' up late of a mornin', and late at his work, and stoppin' at home on bad days, and so on.

"Well, it was Outdoor Relief as ruined Tim. They gave him Relief one hard winter, and he's never been the same man since. Lost his power of work, Tim has. You know how it is, sir, with that there Outdoor Relief. They give you enough to keep you from dying, but not enough to keep you living. Well, Tim got his Relief, and has never done a fair day's work since. He was shiftless always, but he'd have done for hisself for years to come, if it hadn't been for that there Outdoor Relief. He's had it once, and he just spends all his life in waiting for more of it. 'What for should you work when there's Relief goin' a beggin'?' says Tim.

"It's just the bits of things that brings a man down to the Relief and the Poorhouse," John's widow remarked, as she went on sorting out rags with energy. "A bit late in the morning to-day and a bit later to-morrow. Saying you're ill on Monday six times in six months. Gettin' a pint too much in the middle of the day instead of leavin' it till five o'clock when work's done. Takin' your saw out of pawn when you didn't need it for the job you had on hand, and forgettin' to take out your chisel when you did need it. Gettin' locked up for sparrin' with your mates out in the open street, instead of havin' it out quiet and gentlemanly-like in the back-yard. Those are the things as brings you down. Now Ned Simmons, I will say that for him, drink's his only blame. That's why he's kept hisself respectable so long.

"Then there's Sam Barton, he's been a husband three times over, and he'll soon have to be looking out for his fourth, for that pore creature he's got now can't last much longer, seein' that he always locks the door now when he's goin' to set to.

"He's a big ruffian of a fellow is Sam, and the wife's small and spry, and used to slip out under his arm or behind his back when she saw he meant to set on her. Many's the time she's come to me and begged a bed on my bags of rags, but now, as I was sayin', he's that cunnin' he locks the door on her first.

"Sam's first wife, she was the only one as could ever manage him. She was a quiet, peace'ble sort of woman, but she always said with one like her Sam, the only way was to give cuff for cuff. She never hit first, but when once he began, she went at him with a will. She was a big, stout woman, and as when they had it out, she was always sober and Sam was always tight, he soon found he got as good as he gave with her, and from that time they were like two turtle-doves, her and Sam, and every one was sorry for him when he lost her.

"Sam's number two was very different. She'd jus' stand still when he hit her and yell! I've sometimes seen a matter of fifty people under the window listenin' to her, and a copper in the background a-thinkin' whether he'd blow his whistle for one of his pals or chanst goin' in alone, for it's a rough place that street where Sam Barton lives. Then the street got tired of her yellin' in the end, and they said she must jus' get Sam locked up for once, so as they could have a night's rest.

"Well, as it happened, the day as she was to go to the P'lice Court she had no marks on her worth showin'. Sam's pals always said his bark was worse than his bite, and what does she do but rub her eyes and her arm over with blacklead to make the bruises show more.

"How they larft at the Court, coppers and clerk and all,

when they found out about the blacklead, and Sam got off with half-a-crown and a warnin'.

"He was that pleased that he never did nothin' to her for havin' him up, but the lads about they gave her no peace for long after, shoutin' out 'Blacklead' at her whenever she put her nose out of doors.

"Well, sir, I dare say it is as you say, it's only the worst of 'em as comes in that way to me, but if so there's a good many worsts in my part of the town.

"There's Nat Morris. Hardly a week that goes, but I get his tools in. That's his saw and hammer here now at your elbow. Say he begins on Monday with a three days' job; well, on Wednesday night he'll be in here with his tools, and when he's in work again I'll let him have 'em back cheap, knowing as they'll soon be here again.

"He'll shift to borrow tools from his mates at times, but your mates get shy of lending when it has to be done reg'lar.

"It's not as Nat drinks so much hisself, but he's that easy and that friendly, he can't meet a pal without standin' him a drink. If some folks was as gen'rus and friendly with their wives as they is with their mates, there'd be more widows get married again than there is now."

And with that solution of one of life's problems, our John's widow turned her neat little shoulder upon me and proceeded to sort out and count over a sack full of empty bottles which her man-of-all-work had just brought in.

VI

"THERE'S BEER AND BACCY AND A BIT ON"

THE conversations the Easts hold with their employers or proposed employers are often of interest. Of these, stray examples may be given.

"Could you let me have a couple of shillings, sir? I am rather hard up this week."

"Why, East, you've had regular work with me this six months. I paid you thirty-five shillings on Saturday and this is only Tuesday."

"Yes, sir—I know, sir—but I—well, I've only got a few browns now, not enough to buy my beer and baccy."

"Has all the rest gone on beer and baccy too?"

"Well, sir, a man has to live, and there's standing drinks to your pals, and there's beer and baccy and there's a bit on, and there's beer and baccy and the likes of that, and——"

"Oh, well, well, here's the money, we must get to work. The day's half gone."

FIRST ACT.—MONDAY MORNING.

CARPENTER: "I'd be very glad if you'd give me a job, sir. You remember me; I worked for you up at Smith's in King Street, eighteen months ago."

SMALL BUILDER : "I remember, but your work was not satisfactory. I paid you off in the middle of the week and finished that new doorway off myself."

CARPENTER : "I'm three pounds in debt for my rent, sir, and there's four small children, and we'll be turned out and our sticks gone if I don't show the landlord the colour of my money on Saturday."

SMALL BUILDER : "Poor chap! Well, come over to my place and I'll give you another trial."

SECOND ACT.—SATURDAY MORNING.

SMALL BUILDER : "I promised the gentleman this job should be finished this week, but there have been some bad mistakes and we're not nearly through yet. To-day's Saturday. Will you stop on till three or four o'clock to finish?"

CARPENTER : "Right you are, Guv'nor, but I must have my time and a half."

SMALL BUILDER : "That's one and fourpence-halfpenny an hour, and I'm losing on the job as you know. I cut it down too fine and the work hasn't been well done. I can't give you more than your elevenpence an hour and a sixpence over."

CARPENTER : "Can't be done, Guv'nor. There's the Union and that."

SMALL BUILDER : "The Union doesn't touch these small jobs, you know that as well as I do. Come now, it's take it, or leave it."

CARPENTER : "Then it's leave it, you old skinflint. I'm off. Give me my darned five and forty shillings and let me be off. You may get some one else to do your darned overtime. I won't!"

So the Carpenter and his five and forty bobs go to the Pub, and the Small Builder, with this benison on his head, finishes off the work himself, and sits up till midnight over

his accounts and his estimates, in the drawing-up of which his Board-School education has not served him in very good stead.

At the Greengrocer's:

"Do you think you could give Mrs. East a day's charing now and again, ma'am? She's left a widow with five little children. Her husband was a scaffold-builder, but he fell from a building the other day and was killed on the spot."

"But the Employer's Liability Act."

"Well, you see, ma'am, the poor chap was drunk at the time; he always was more or less drunk, so the Act couldn't help him."

"A scaffold-builder, you say? Did he leave his widow nothing? I always thought that trade was very well paid."

"It is, ma'am. The man would take his three pounds a week for months together, during the greater part of the year, but he drank it all as it came in. His wife has been an ailing body ever since her marriage and was often in hospital. She managed as well as she could, but when she was out and about again, she'd always find the furniture at the pawnshop, and the children's clothes as well, all but what they stood up in."

At Erith-on-Thames. The Royal Alfred Merchant Sailors' Home:

"What fine old fellows you are down here, but you, my friend, you can't be much more than sixty-five. What brought you here?"

"The London Dock strike, sir. I had fifteen years' good work left in me when it came on, and I should be outside still if it hadn't been for that. A score of us came at the same time and all through that 'ere strike. We was too old to begin again and our berths was all gone

when the strike was over. Some of us died off and for the rest, after a year or two of gettin' on as well as we could, they took us in here, as many of us as there was room for. There's a many of us waiting still, it was my old admiral, Sir Leopold McClintock, he's President here you know, it was him as got them to make room for me here, bless his kind heart."

"And you, my friend, what's your story?"

"I'd been at Doughty and Doughty's, the great ship-builders, for five and twenty years, sir. Before that I was twenty years at sea, then my mates at the docks struck and I had to go with them. Our governor couldn't carry out his contracts through the strike. It was the third there'd been in his works in nine years, so he chucked up the whole show and retired, and his sons took the business to some forrin parts. I've heard tell they didn't do very well there, as their capital was all gone, poor young gentlemen."

East's change of front when, having asked work of West, the latter tries to arrange terms, is Gilbertian in its completeness. West has a small garden in the suburbs, and to him comes East on a February morning, after a slight fall of snow.

"Could you give me a crust of bread, sir? I haven't done a day's work this five weeks."

"What's your trade?"

"Gardener, sir. My master turned me off when the winter came on, and I haven't done," etc.

"I won't give you the crust, but I'll let you earn it. You shall do up my garden, and I'll give you four shillings for the eight hours' day if it is satisfactory, but I shall take off one shilling for the three meals I shall give you while you're here."

"Four and six is a gardener's pay for a day's work all the country over, sir. Often enough it's five shillings."

"I give you four shillings. First you sweep up the snow, then you go round to the kitchen for a bowl of oatmeal and milk. After that you chop up those logs of wood and whitewash over that wall at the lower end of the garden.'

"Whitewashing isn't gardening, sir, and oatmeal's poor stuff to sweep up snow on."

"One o'clock is the kitchen dinner hour, and before that you will have done the things I said, and turned over that heap of leaf-mould, and spread those cinders over the path and carted that soil——"

"Hold hard, Guv'nor! All that before I get the grub I've paid for myself. That's slave-driving, that is."

"After a good dinner, you shall have a quarter of an hour's rest while you tell me how it is that your master turned you off. A working-gardener told me yesterday, that in every part of the town there were gardeners who were only too glad to keep on a steady sober man through the winter even if they couldn't give him much to do, for the sake of his work the rest of the year. He explained further, that a gardener's winter is shorter than that of any man in the country, for November's the busiest time of his year, and his spring work begins the end of January.

"In fact he warned me to always distrust a tale of distress from a gardener, for, as he said, unless the ground is actually locked up by frost, he can find work for his man from Christmas Day of one year to Christmas Day of the next. Even if there's no work to be done in the potting sheds and glass houses, his clients will always oblige him by letting his men sweep up the snow in the gardens or even whitewash the scullery and clean the windows if there's nothing else to do. Your tale would have passed muster with me very well a year or two ago, but since then I've been to the fountain head for information, and however sorry I may be for you, I'm afraid you've brought most of your troubles on yourself."

VII

“ A LAW UNTO HIMSELF ”

BABY EAST is three years old. Baby West is about the same. Baby East prefers strong tea to milk and bread for supper, and strong tea he will have, or the whole quarter will know the reason why.

Baby West is offered no choice. He must accept his milk and bread or be sent to Coventry. If he weep salt tears into his cup, nurse will soon be down on him with the story of that other baby she knew, young Master West, she calls him, though his real name is Public Opinion, who wouldn't have thought of doing such a thing, though *he* was six weeks younger.

It is the main object of Baby West's life to stand well in the eyes of that other Baby, Master West, whom he never has seen and never will see, but who sits in judgment upon him day and night on a throne of unctuous superiority. Here he spends his time in eating Fat and Crusts and Rice-pudding, and never runs out on the landing if the nursery door is left open, and always gives the match-box back to his nurse at once, without striking a single match, if he find it on the floor.

For Sunday morning's breakfast, sausages and marmalade are a usual nursery treat at each end of the town. Now, Baby West may have one or the other, but he may not have both dainties. Baby East not only has both, but

has both together, jam on the top of sausage and sausage mixed up with jam, on the principle that Sunday comes but once a week and you can't have too much of a good thing.

Presently, Papa West's old friend gives Baby a penny. Baby, of course, plans to go out and spend it. Instead, he is told the penny must go into his money-box.

That other Baby, young Master West, wouldn't have needed telling. The very last thing he would have thought of doing if anyone had given him a penny would have been to spend it, and *he* was six weeks younger.

Baby West sobs in secret. He is not very old yet, but he has already learnt a certain amount of self-restraint, and he tries, though he fails, to find comfort in the idea that papa sent a second penny chinking after the first into that hateful little receptacle, where he is told that the pence are growing into pounds, ready for when he's a man.

Baby East has, meanwhile, gone out to spend his penny long ago. Don't say he hasn't got one. Every untaught curate finds, to his astonishment, during his first month at the docks or in Whitechapel, that each child there always owns a penny. Sometimes it is given to the little thing by the man going into the public-house, sometimes by his father, sometimes by his father's friend, who is sorry for the kiddy whose father hasn't got a copper to bless him with. Sometimes he has earned it by service performed. Sometimes he has obtained it without earning. In any case, the penny is there.

That penny is spent at the sweet shop. No need to cross the road, it is here at Baby East's elbow. The sweet shop is prevalent as the public-house in those quarters where the poor do congregate. The two pay an equally handsome dividend, each in its degree.

Baby West learns early that the days when he may spend a penny on sweetstuff, are few and far between.

It will spoil his teeth, for which he cares not a scrap. It will spoil his digestion, for which he cares less.

There is one thing for which he does care, namely, the verdict of that other Baby, Public Opinion. To this, he learnt in his pink and white bassinet, that he must either bow the knee through life, or become an outcast and a pariah.

For Baby East, there is no Public Opinion. He is a law unto himself. This law is occasionally combated by that of the Courts. For the most part it reigns supreme.

Baby East lives chiefly on sweets for the first ten years of his existence. For the next ten, he subsists on sardines and tinned lobster, not because they are cheaper than beef or mutton, for they are not. Sardines, even those from an East End barrow, being amongst the most costly things you can eat. It takes so many to produce an effect. Not then, because they are cheap, but because the East always prefers that which makes him pale and puny. Most bluejackets on most battleships would cheerfully barter their beefsteak for a tin of sardines, did the ship's regulations allow it. Tommy Atkins would do the same. He too, in some cases, was Baby East in his day.

On Baby West's birthday, certain caskets appear on the nursery table. A tantalus glimpse proves them to be filled with chocolate. Baby West calculates that it will take him the greater part of two days to finish the lot.

Mother then swoops down, saying that one box may remain with nurse, who will dole out the chocolates by degrees. Chocolates by degrees! Picture the torture of the proceeding. The surplus boxes, mother mentions, are to go to the poor little children in the East End, the poor little children who never have anything good to eat, nor often anything bad, from the day they are born till they die.

Breakfast over, Baby East goes through a form of dressing.

Baby West is not allowed to break his fast till his toilet is complete in every detail. Public Opinion again. Were his own wishes consulted, he would find it pleasanter to run about the room, as does Baby East, shoeless, coatless, and the nearer the state of nature the better. A slap or a snub keeps little West in due bounds, but the latitude allowed little East in this direction goes far to compensate him for the sneeze that must come later on. Who would not cheerfully accept the contingency of being cold in winter, provided he were allowed to be cool in the dog days.

The daily tub is another grievance to which Baby East need not and would not submit, while Baby West must endure the ordeal from the start to the finish of his natural life.

As a baby, he fights fiercely against that tub, but he has to submit to it all the same. Later he comes to regard it with toleration, even to like it sometimes, but to take it always, from the time your hair is downy till it is grey, be it needed or not, be the day torrid or glacial, be you in haste or at leisure, is too much. However, Public Opinion has spoken and the tyranny of the tub must continue.

In addition to the tub, Baby West must early form a habit of sleeping with his window open. Just when he has cuddled down snug and cosy in his bed, nurse goes up to the curtain, and, thrusting it savagely aside, hurls in an icy current which lashes baby's nose and ears and sends him cowering under his sheets.

Baby East, whose bedtime is not when it should be, but when he pleases, knows nothing of the tyranny of open window and closed curtains. He lies warm and comfy for the most part in the nice close air, and during the first hour when bed is so dull, he can jump up at any minute and look out on the excitement of the street below. Happy

child, unfettered and free, no restriction, no restraint, happy child is Baby East.

Youth in its extreme, again, loathes to lie alone.

Therefore, so soon as the lights are out, little West slips over to his brother's bed. Sometimes even, to that snug corner where the fat podginess of the ultimate baby is rolled up in cuddlesome slumber.

Entrance there has been at times achieved and full one minute's bliss enjoyed before the ultimate, indignant at finding its eyes opened through the hauling up of its eye-lashes, or a friendly bite taken at its rosebud of a thumb, raised its voice in uproarious protest, leading to vengeance on the intruder summary and severe.

But poor little brothers East have no second bed to run to. All must herd in one. A nursery of half-a-dozen, huddled after the manner of young birds in a single nest.

How bitter must be the tears they weep to feel they cannot lie alone.

Thus the sympathetic Humanitarian, till one day he went with a band of youngsters for a week at the sea. There, oh joy, the brigade of little Easts found a bed provided for each.

During a term of seconds, the new-comers gazed at those cribs in silent delight, an autocrat's delight. Then they tumbled in with yells of delight, while the Humanitarian joined his brother officers at mess.

"Poor little devils! They'll sleep sound to-night. They've never known what it was before to each have a bed to themselves."

An hour later, a more seasoned lieutenant called up the Humanitarian.

"Let's go and have a look at your little devils."

They hied them to the first crib and found it empty.

To the second. No one there.

Numbers three, four, five the same. Had then the camp already ceased to charm? Were its defenders fled?

Not so, for in the tenth crib, that in the corner by the wall, were found ten round heads and a hydra of entangled limbs.

Young East had found himself a-feared or a-bored by solitude, and, having given it fair trial, elected to sleep with his fellows.

"It's quite true, what they say," quoth the Humanitarian: "No one ever will understand the mysterious East."

"Not till they have been there," rejoined his companion laconically.

VIII

"YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS HAVE SPOILT THE TRADE"

"I HEARD you were parting with your butler, sir, and should be glad if you'd give me a trial. I was six months with Sir George D'Arcy, whom you know. My name's East. I have had the honour of serving you when you dined with Sir George."

"I'm afraid it's no use your coming to me, I'm not thinking of having another butler. Lady West thinks of trying a parlourmaid."

"I wish you'd try me, sir ; I've had no work for over a year. I've got a wife and five children, and we're badly behind with our rent."

"Well, the truth is Lady West says she is tired of asking where the wine has gone to, and how it is that seven new lamp chimneys are wanted in a fortnight, and she does not know what the butler finds to do all day, as it seems to her the footman does all the work."

"Here are my testimonials, sir, if you'd just look at them."

"Let's see the testimonials then. H'm, I don't think much of them ! However, here's one from a man I know, and I don't like the idea of the parlourmaid myself. Come now, we'll bargain. I can't afford these inroads on

the wine cellar. If I engage you, will you take the pledge?"

"By your leave, sir, I don't think you've a right to ask that of a man."

"Well, we'll pass the pledge; but as I'm not particularly well off just now, having just had a very heavy financial loss, if I take you, will you do without a footman? We're only four in the family, we don't entertain much, and I need very little valeting."

"Seeing that I've never been in a place without a footman in my life, sir, I don't think I can come down to that now."

"Good! I'll allow the footman, but in that case I must make a difference in your wages. I see what you had in your last place, where, by the way, you only stopped three months. Will you take £10 a year less than you had there? That will still leave you with very fair pay as things go."

"Well, sir, a man has to live, and seeing I have a family I don't see that I could——"

"Well, well, I'll give you what you had before. But I must tell you Lady West particularly dislikes gossip; we've both suffered a good deal from it of late, and it has all been traced to the servants' hall. If I engage you, will you undertake not to attend any Club meetings nor to continue any acquaintance you may have with the servants of houses where Lady West and I visit?"

"Why, sir, you can't expect a man to give up his friends, can you?"

"All right, I'll allow the Club when we're in town, but I must tell you we don't intend to come up at all next season. My place is in Yorkshire, and we mean to spend the whole year there; perhaps we may remain away for two years, or even three. I'll arrange for you to have your family down at the end of three months if you give satisfaction. There's a small lodge in the park which will

be empty early in the autumn ; I'll establish you all there, of course making a certain reduction in your wages on account of you having no rent to pay for your house in town. The schools are close at hand for the children, and I've no doubt we could find some occupation for the elder ones in the stables and gardens."

"Well, sir, thanking you all the same, but I don't see my way to going to live in the country indefinitely, and without meaning any offence, me and my wife would not care about the lodge, there'd be very limited accommodation, and I have to consider my position in the eyes of the other servants."

"You don't see your way to going into the country, and a lodge wouldn't be smart enough ! Of course, it's for you to decide on those points ; perhaps you'd like to think it over, but I must tell you that if you come to me, either in town or country, I should require you and the cook to make me a mutual promise in each other's presence, that no food-stuff should pass from the kitchen to your own private dining-room. I lately decided never to have a married butler with a family again, as one I had with me for some years, in whom Lady West and I had reposed absolute trust and confidence, was in the habit of supplying his own family table almost exclusively from the kitchens here, duplicate dishes being cooked specially for them as prepared for the servants' hall. These were sent out hot to the flat in Park Row, just behind Park Street where we are now. I really believe the man had taken up his residence there for the special purpose. We discovered what was being done quite by accident. It seems the whole household knew of it, but, of course, none of them had the decency to stop it, and it may have gone on for years for anything we knew."

"A very stupid man that butler must have been, sir, I should never have thought of doing such a thing in that way myself."

"Your comment is a trifle ambiguous, isn't it, my friend? However, I should require the engagement to be made with the cook, as I said."

"I'm afraid I should have to ask you to trust to my word, sir; it would put both the cook and me in a queer position if it got about we had done it in the way you say."

"Oh, it wouldn't get about. I should save your face, as the Chinese say, but the promise would have to be made. I daresay you'll think that over, too. Then there are the trade commissions. I warn you definitely that in future I mean to deal at the Stores only, for everything, from wine down to the lamp chimneys, and it will be no use when you have been here a few weeks, indicating that you will give me notice to leave unless I transfer my custom to the shops."

"Well, sir, I may take the liberty to tell you that there's always discontent in a house, not in the butler's pantry only, but all through, if the family deals at the Stores: what with the quality of goods supplied and one thing or another, no one is satisfied."

"I'll run my chances as to that. It is to be the Stores only with us henceforth, even if it means shutting up the pantry itself."

"Perhaps you'll see your way to reconsider that, sir."

"No, no; don't nurse any delusions of that kind, it would only lead to disappointment. Then, as to going out, I always allow a man-servant who has his own home, considerably more liberty than an unmarried man; but I should always like to know when you were out of the house for any length of time. You could please yourself how you managed about that; arrange to have a certain time, or let Lady West know when you were going out."

"That's a blow at all one's independence, isn't it, sir? May I ask the reason of it?"

"There are a good many reasons. I need only mention that there have been two attempted burglaries and one case of housebreaking here in the last four years, and on each occasion, as it happened, the butler was out of the house when the attempts were made."

"I should have thought, sir, from what you've seen of me——"

"Oh, I don't mean any aspersions, either on your own probity or that of my former butlers. It never occurred to me to think they had any hand in the different matters. It is merely that they had not realised the fact that it was an understood thing when they were engaged, that they were expected to ensure the safety of the house. They could not do this, of course, if they were in the habit every now and then of passing the night under their own roof, without the knowledge of their employers. For anything they knew, I might myself have arranged to be away from home and left Lady West and her jewel-case at the mercy of a burglar, when she had no one but the women-servants in the house."

"I've no doubt we shall be able to come to some understanding about that, sir, after I am settled in the house."

"It must be before, not after you're settled here, I'm afraid. And there's one other detail I must mention, as you would valet me. I am rather generous as to giving away my clothes, but I like to have control over my own wardrobe, and I don't care for anything to be taken from my dressing-room without my permission, even if it's only an old smoking-jacket. I should probably agree to hand over anything of the kind I was asked for; still, I must be consulted first.

"One trifle more and I've done. When we're late at night, I like my butler to take it turn-about for sitting up with the footman. That has not been done much here of late, and Lady West's conscience troubles her, because one

of the young fellows we had, was made to wait up nearly every night in the season, and had to be down in the morning to take in the schoolroom breakfast at eight o'clock as well. That, and having most of the butler's work to do as well as his own, was too much for him. He broke down completely under the strain, and I've got him in a convalescent home at this moment.

"What, you think I make too many stipulations. Then, in that case, we'll consider the matter at an end. I don't know that I should care for the parlourmaid, so I will arrange with Lady West to engage an Italian I heard of yesterday. Till now, I admit, I always declared I would never let a foreign man-servant enter my doors, for I'm down on the alien altogether, so far as taking the work out of the hands of the native goes. However, you've decided me on having the Italian. This one has a good character, and they know all about him at his Consulate. When the foreign Consulates can vouch for a few more of their men's honesty and respectability, there'll be a good many French and Italian butlers in London houses, such as mine, where the owners are not too well off. I may say, however, that I consider an English butler is one of the finest men of his kind in the world when he's the right sort, and for those who can afford to let him do as he likes. Still the number of landed proprietors, such as myself, who can't afford this, increases every year, and I greatly regret to say the number of trustworthy butlers is not on the increase."

"If I may make so free as to say so, sir, you won't like the Italian, not after the sort of thing you've been accustomed to."

"I'll see to that. As I say, he's guaranteed by his Consulate, so there's no chance of him turning out to be a burglar in disguise. I am told I shall find him the best valet going. He'll drink nothing but a bottle of his own cheap red wine. He wouldn't know what to do with a footman if I gave him one, in a small house such as mine

is in the country. He'll accept little more than half the wages I should have to give you. He won't prate, or if he does, I shall never hear of it, as it will only be among people of his own tongue.

"Now let me give you a piece of advice, my friend. You say you've got five children. Well, don't bring any of the boys up to indoor service, for you and your friends have spoilt the trade for a generation to come, and there'll be no room for him. A third of the small houses in town where they had a butler, either single-handed or with a footman, a few years ago, have now got either a parlour-maid or a foreigner, and before long there'll be another third added to the first. Good morning."

IX

"MY WORK'US LADIES STOPS ALONG OF ME"

"I LIKES bein' with you, madam, I likes my victuals and I likes my bed and you don't meddle with me, not extra much, 'cept at times when you're a worry, as I've often meant to tell you."

Thus Mrs. East to her employer, the latter a hard-working artist over whose house the said Mrs. East consents to reign, in return for one-fourth of the total earnings of its owner.

"I'm fair satisfied with you on the whole," she went on, "so I'll stop with you as long as you'll have me, but when I leaves you, I go straight to the work'us and so I tell you."

"Why, Mrs. East, you ought not to even think of the workhouse for a dozen years to come. You're only fifty-three, and very strong for your age."

"And quite old enough, madam. When you've worked hard for fifty-three years like me, you'll think it's about time you had a rest."

"But you haven't worked hard for fifty-three years, Mrs. East. No one begins to work when they're a baby, and you don't do much here, you know, you don't work nearly as hard as I do."

"It's no credit to you to work hard, madam, because *you* ain't obliged to. You work because you like it. I

work because I've got to. That's the difference and I've always held it was reg'lar mean to make comparisons. Maybe you'll think it all over and be sorry when you've druv me to the work'us."

"You'd better think that well over before you make up your mind, Mrs. East. It's easier to get into a workhouse than to get out again, and workhouses aren't very nice places."

"Beggin' your pardin', madam, but you don't know nothin' about it. Work'uses, as they make 'em now, are very nice places indeed. They know better than to put us poor downtrodden folks into such places as they made for us when I was a gel. More shame to 'em, says I."

"Well, wait till you get there, Mrs. East, then you'll see."

"Beggin' your pardin' again, ma'am, but I *have* been there and I know what I'm talkin' on, every word of it. It was the Marylebone work'us I gone to and it was like this. I was standing at Baker Street station, just thinkin' about nothin' at all 'cept how hard I had to work for my daily bread and beer.

"Then I says to a Perliceman as was a standin' there, all handy for talk, 'What's that fine new buildin' over there?' says I. 'Is it the pallus they've built for Princess Victory when she gets herself married, for if it is she'll have a whome as she needn't be ashamed of when she goes in her carriage to call on her mar at Buckingham Pallus.'

"'No, it isn't for Princess Victory, and it isn't a pallus,' says my Perliceman. 'It's the new work'us.'

"'Garn,' says I, 'If it isn't Princess Victory's pallus,' says I, 'it must be the new Town Hall as I've heard talk of a year ago.'

"'No,' says the Perliceman, 'It's the work'us all ready for you an' me.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'if that's the work'us, the sooner all the world gets there the better.'

" 'Right you are,' says 'e, 'and a gen'man who said he was a ratepayer, he said just the same when he was along here yesterday. And those ol' men as you sees hangin' out of the winders, they's the paupers,' he went on.

" 'Only see there ! Each one of the paupers has got a droring-room and a bow window all to hisself,' says I, 'an' lor what windows, reg'lar acres of glass, an' all those nice warm lights to 'em as one sees when one walks by in the cold after tea.'

" 'Yes,' says my Perliceman, 'it's often made me wish I was in at my own station, it has. And this Marylebone, it hasn't even the egscuse of being Whitechapel way, it hasn't. A prosperous neighbourhood this is, even the parts near Lissom Grove. There's not many near us wouldn't find work, not if they set out to look for it proper.' Them was the Perliceman's notions, madam, I'm tellin' them as told me, but we all knows as Perlicemen isn't allus right nohow.

" 'But are you certain sure,' said I, 'you aren't making game of me, are you ? It's all over balconies it is, an' gardens an' greenhouse in front, an' towers an' flagstaffs an' pillars an' galleries to look right through it, same as there is at Somerset House, an' that was built for Kings to live in, so I've heard tell.'

" 'It's all right,' says he, 'it's the work'us as I'm tired of telling you of, and if you looks through them galleries, you'll see a playground for the folks inside, 'arf as big as 'Ide Park. Big enough to have a Four-in-'and meeting,' says 'e. 'That's the inner court and there's more than one of it. An' there's big mansions to right and left of it, as is let to the quality for 'underds and 'underds in the year, but they looks but poor places now they've got this fine work'us alongside of 'em.'

“ ‘I’ve ’arf a mind to go in and see it,’ I said, ‘but I don’t see where’s the front door.’

“ ‘Oh, that’s round at the other side,’ says the Perlice-man. ‘You walk and walk and walk till you’re tired, along the Marylebone Road, that’s all along the work’us front, then you turn the corner sharp and go on walk, walk, walkin’, till you get to the main entrance. That’s where you go in. But you’ll have to have a right of entry. They’s perticklar, they is, at the work’us, they don’t want ratepayers and sich to tramp in and say, “What’s all this rates and taxes as I ’as to pay for.”’

“ ‘Oh, you let me alone,’ says I, ‘I’ll find a way of gettin’ in, never you fear.’

“Well, I thought out an egscuse and went in, madam, and found it all as nice as you please, as ’ow it ought to be for pore downtrodden folks like us. Then the first thing I noticed, was that there was electric light all through. Handles up and down everywhere to save you trouble. No messin’ about with matches an’ candles like here. You ’aven’t got no electric light in this ’ouse, ’ave you, madam?”

“No, Mrs. East, I only wish I had. I am only a ratepayer and I have to console myself by paying for it for the paupers.”

“Well then, waitin’ about for some one to attend to my business, I found they had electric bells ringin’ cheerful like all about. You haven’t got no electric bells here, have you, madam?”

“No, Mrs. East, those also I give to the paupers.”

“Then they ’as lor beautiful tiles up the walls to splash against when you scrub the floors, not common blacks and whites, but beautiful green ones all shiny like glass an’ iron trimmin’s all twisted about in nice shapes over the doors and gates and fine big frames to the windowises and doorses, not bits of narrer ones as is only fit for a common studio like yours, madam.

"So I sat there takin' it all in and sayin' to myself: Why should I go on slavin' my 'eart out outside, which there's all this waitin' for me for the askin' in 'ere. An' I turns it all over in my mind, sayin' to myself how much it was all improved from the time I was a gel.

"There's one thing in perticklar as is changed quite new, an' it's with no disrespec' I'm tellin' it you, madam, as a hint like. Well you know when I leaves my crusses and tops and bottoms of loaves, you makes me set 'em aside for a pudden at end o' the week. Well, I've heard they was that mean, that they had used to do that same at the work'uses.

"Then the paupers they all struck and threatened as they'd leave in a body, as was on'y right they should, if this wasn't stopped. So the masters and missises of all the work'uses, promised as the abuse should be put a' end to. Now all the crusses an' bits o' bread off the tables as 'as been fingered and broke to meal-times is give to the sausage-makers what comes with their sacks every day for 'em, an' the paupers they 'as fresh bread to each meal, as they orter done from the first.

"Next, madam, 'avin' 'ad a good look at the Marylebone, I walks on to another work'us, polishin' up my egscuse for gettin' in as I goes, to make sure as it 'ud pass. They puts me to wait in the passage all same as before, then says I to myself, 'Gimme the Marylebone for it's the best, though this un is good enough for such as ain't seen the t'other.'

"Then I says to one o' the fishals as was standin' about 'avin' nothin' to do but talk to fren's, 'How about the liquors in this 'ere Work'us? I read in my paper, which I 'as 'ad a good eddication and likes to know my polintics, I read that at Grimsby the gem'man an' lady inmates of the work'us got seven 'underd an' fifty bottles o' beer an' a 'underd bottles o' sperrits give to 'em in the last few months. What liquor a 'ed does they give 'ere?'

“‘It’s four ounces o’ sperrits each daily,’ says the fishal.

“‘I don’t know nothin’ about ounces,’ says I. ‘Ow much is we allowed in quarts?’ says I, ‘that’s what I wants to know.’ But the fishal ’e was called away afore ’e ’ad time to answer me, so I’ll ’ave to make it my business to find out about the liquor another day.

“Then while I was still waitin’ quite patient and pleased in the passage, a lady she comes in an’ says she wants to inquire about gettin’ a servant. They put her in a room near my passage and the mistress of the work’us went to ’er an’ asks ’er business.

“‘Avin’ nothin’ better to do, I hitches myself a bit nearer up to the door to ’ear what they was sayin’.

“‘Which my ’usband’s a ratepayer,’ says the lady, ‘and we can’t get a servant no ’ow,’ says she. ‘So, says my ’usband, “as I’m payin’ a matter of thirty pounds a year for my rates and taxes, why shouldn’t we get a servant out of the work’us as can do her work proper and be worth ’er keep and pay no rates and taxes at all, which will be on’y fair?” says ’e, “seein’ as ’ow we’ll ’ave relieved the country o’ one of their paupers, which I’ve ’eard as each pauper costs a matter of thirty pounds a year,” says ’e.’

“Reg’lar mean idea that of the lady’s ’usband, wasn’t it, madam? Wot ’is wife ought to a been ashamed to repeat such talk, but she wasn’t; she said it all off pat just like sayin’ a lesson, all same as I’m tellin’ it you.

“Howsomdever the mistress of the work’us was up to them tricks, and she says: ‘I don’t know about her doin’ the work proper,’ says she, ‘we don’t guarantee nothin’. You’ve got to just train ’em to your own likin’ yourself. What wages will you give?’

“‘My ’usband he says,’ the lady says, ‘if you gives ’em a ’ome an’ lodgin’ and their keep an’ takes ’em off the parish that ought to be enough, says ’e, but we’ll give her

some of her clotheses too, just a new plain warm thing now and then, an' some of my own for the rest, an' we'll give her two shillin's a week for pocket money an' that's all we'll do,' says the lady.

" 'Two shillin's a week ! ' 'ollered out the mistress of the work'us.

" 'Yes,' says the lady, that mean as she was an' not ashamed, ' we've lost a sight of money through the war and we can't afford no more, an' I do a deal of the work myself.'

" 'Two shillin's a week ! ' 'ollered out the mistress again. ' 'Ow can you egspect a body to keep honest on two shillin's a week ?'

" 'There's board and lodgin' and part of her clothes as well,' says the lady, as she picked up 'er umbrella an' marched away for she saw she wasn't goin' to get no servant, not she.

" 'Things is all right 'ere,' I says to myself. 'This work'us 'll suit me. That there mistress she knows her dooty.' 'A 'ome an' a lodgin' an' 'er keep an' part of her clotheses an' two shillin's a week ! ' says she. ' *That's* not good enough and my work'us ladies they stops along a me.' "

X

“WANTED : A MILKMAID ”

“ HAVE you any milkmaids come in yet ? ” breathlessly inquired a stalwart young farmer, as he dashed into the hiring-fair of a town in the north the other day.

“ Nairy one ! ” said the manager phlegmatically, as he good-naturedly laid a hand on the farmer’s smoking horse, while the young man got down from his spring-cart. “ The sun’s not long been ris yet, and the young ladies don’t trouble theirselves till nine or ten o’clock.”

“ I suppose they know we’ll have to wait for them, come what time they choose,” said the farmer somewhat gloomily, for by leaving his home before dawn he had hoped to catch his early milkmaid.

“ That’s about it,” said the manager dryly, “ and there was only one on them that did choose last time, and she had the pick of ten of you farmers, four of you with only a mother or a sister to keep house for them. My lady took care to make sure of that of me, before she’d hear of them even being introduced.”

“ And how many do you expect to-day, for that’s what I’m here for ? ” said the young man in the corduroy breeches.

“ Well, there may be several, but for certain sure, I’m only expecting one,” said the cautious north-countryman, “ though I don’t say as others mayn’t turn up, if the day

keeps fine. But I don't know as my beauty will suit you, for though she understands dairy-work and is willin' to do it, she says you won't get her to milk the cows, no how."

"But milking's not hard work, and that's what a dairy-maid's for!" expostulated Farmer West.

"You're right, sir, as to what dairymaids *was* for, but now they seems to be for hanging about the byre and watching the man do the work. You see the way my young lady puts it is, if she does the milking, there'd be one man less about the place, and she likes to have a man handy."

"And this girl, is she worth anything?"

"Well, she was worth hiring six times over last fair-day," said the manager, "anyhow that was what six farmers seemed to think, for the six was ready with wages that would have made my wife's eyes dance if she'd been offered them at her farm twenty years back. Miss Dairy-maid chose one of the six. Took her time over it too, she did, put him through all his paces before she'd done with him. Then being hired and settled, she went off with her chap for a bit of fun, and never no more was heard of her that day. The farmer, who'd got a rug for her all ready on his cart, waited till he dursn't wait no longer for he'd a matter of fifteen miles to drive, over the worst road in these parts, and there was an ugly look in the sky and a young horse in the shafts.

"Then he went off, and next morning my young lady turns up as bold as you please.

"'Where's my farmer?' says she.

"'Gone home, a trifle of fifteen hours ago,' says I.

"'But he hadn't oughter have gone without me,' says she.

"'Where was you, then?' said I.

"'You see,' says she, and naira blush to her cheek, 'there was the booths and the whirligig and the swing-

boats and the cocoanut-shy and the Punch and Judy and tell-you-your-fortune and one thing or another, it was getting late when I was through it all, so I went home and got my supper and went to bed. I made sure he'd a waited for me till the morning, seeing how many of him there was as wanted me,' she said, and she looked a bit troubled, for Sam East her father's a big man, and ready with his boot."

"I hope the boot was waiting when she went home again," said the young farmer vindictively, for he knew what was meant by fifteen miles at night with a young horse on a bad road.

"Best keep a civil tongue in your head, young man," said the manager of the fair warningly, "or you may be sorry for it when you come to wanting to hire my miss, in a couple of hours' time."

"But where have all the girls gone to, anyhow?" said the farmer, "my own part of the country was always lonesome, but here in the town, with the rail to bring them up as quick as you please, there should be as many as is wanted, seeing what the work and the wages are now."

"The rail's more used to taking them away than to bringing them up to time in the dairies," was the reply. "There was the Secretary of the British Farmers' Association asking that same, no longer ago than last week," he went on, "Secretary said, 'there's men and boys as milkers now on nearly every farm I visit,' said he, 'and it hadn't oughter be. It's waste of time when they're wanted for field work, and so hard to get. Where is the girls all gone to?' says he.

"Well sir,' says I, 'if they're stout enough, they're at the pitbrow, and if they're quick enough with their fingers and a headful of vanities, they takes the train and goes to Halifax or Liverpool as dressmakers and milliners, and if they're just ordinary, there's always some factory open to

them. Anyhow the time's past when they'd agree to be milkmaids. Even if they go as dairymaids, or servants in a farmhouse, they stipulate that the milking should be left out, just as the town-servants now all says they won't go where the washing's done at home.' "

At that point the young farmer bade his friend a hasty good-bye and strode across the market-place, for he had caught sight of the Secretary of the Dairy Farmers' Association, and for the moment that great man appeared to be disengaged.

Farmer West was one of the new school. He had been trained just enough and not too much at the most successful Agricultural College of the north, and had come home with the intention of making what he could out of the land already in his hands, before he bought more. He had cut down his household expenses to the lowest possible point and sternly repressed an inclination to ride to hounds with the young fellows who had studied at the college with him. He had borrowed his mother's small fortune of a few hundred pounds, giving her a fair rate of interest and tying himself down to conditions with a mortgage on the farm as security, as strictly as if he were a stranger to her. He had further, after careful consultation with the authorities of his college, borrowed another small sum from the attorney of the neighbouring town, on an agreement that the mortgage should not be called in within seven years.

Presently he resisted a much stronger temptation, that to marry a pretty girl with the heart and the ways of a butterfly, a maiden with pink ribbons round her white throat, who had shot him encouragement from a pair of forget-me-not blue eyes in the depths of a snowy sun-bonnet. Instead he had married a girl he had known from his boyhood. One who was tender and true, strong also to help a man on his way in life, one in whose hands he could leave the superintendence of his farm with equanimity when he

was called away to market or to inspect the machinery of some distant agricultural show.

He had shares amounting to one-fourth and one-sixth, sometimes only to one-eighth, in various recent inventions in steam ploughs and threshing machines and the like, and it was he who had taught the neighbours that even a share of one-eighth in up-to-date machinery, with all costs of repair equally shared, was not to be despised.

Farmer West was a young man of only average wit and intelligence, still he had early learnt not to trust to his own understanding alone, but to profit by what the young deskman and the spectacled scientist had to teach him about the work on his farm. He did not altogether understand why he was not only to wash his apple trees with arsenate of lead to kill the green grub, but must also send up to the college for specimens of a newly imported parasite that would multiply into thousands, breeding four or five times a year, and then destroy that second parasite, indigenous this time, which had destroyed all the work of a year twelve months ago. Still, though not understanding, he did what his books and his professors told him.

Farmer West's brain took in far more readily what it received by word of mouth than by the printed page, but he knew this showed something wanting on his part and he painfully tried to combat this weakness, among other things, by taking in the *Journal of the United States Department of Agriculture*, that being an office which does not exist on the benighted side of the Atlantic.

In a word, he was superior by a long way, to my poor friend from Cheshire who had five times his brains and five times his experience, while he equalled him in energy and perseverance. The Cheshireman, however, had the misfortune to be twenty years his senior, and had been born under different conditions, and was unable for all reasons, to profit by the discoveries and the practices of to-day.

The two farmers, however, had one point in common, of infinitely deeper import in their career than personal enterprise. This was lack of labour, from which the man with the ideas of his modern brothers in his head, suffered equally with the man who painfully and conscientiously tried to carry out the notions of his forbears, not through lack of initiative, but from sheer want of wherewithal to do otherwise.

"I suppose you can't send me two or three good men for my harvest, sir?" said the young farmer, when he came up with his hero of the Association.

"What's the use of asking me that?" replied the latter with pardonable impatience. "Labourers' wages in these northern counties of ours, are higher than in any part of the kingdom, perhaps barring Surrey, yet every man fit for the labour of the country has left the country, either to work in the iron and steel works that he's not suited to, or else to join the Unemployed.

"Then, in exchange for our good flesh and bone and pure blood," he went on, "they're sending us the dregs of the earth from London and the manufacturing towns. Back to the land, they call it, but it's three generations back since these men saw the land, and when countrymen of that type have been in a town for three generations, why they're hardly worth either keeping in it or sending out of it, as we in the north know to our cost."

"I can't say much for the half-dozen you sent me over for the haymaking, sir."

"What's the matter with the half-dozen?" growled the Secretary, who was obviously in an ill-temper to-day. Perhaps he was in want of a milkmaid.

"Why, sir, if you saw them in my orchard at this minute, you'd say everything was the matter with them. From the casual wards of the workhouse they're come, every man jack of them, and they look it. Not that I should mind their looks if they didn't act it and live it

too. Never a bit of sinew or muscle among them, and they're as sulky and surly a lot as you'd wish to see. If the laws and customs of the country let me take my cow-whip to them once or twice, just as a hint, not to really hurt them, it would do them good, all the good in the world, as well as relieve my feelings."

"They don't go beyond a scowl and a growl, I suppose?"

"They haven't got much farther than that as yet, sir, but you can see that they'd like to. There was one of them, foreign blood he had in him by his colouring, I should say, and he half drew a knife on me the other day. You may suppose I was not going to put up with that. I stopped the work of the whole gang, and said that unless that knife was thrown at my feet, I should pack the whole lot off without their wages by the first train to the police court in London.

"I meant what I said at the time, I can tell you, sir, though, looking back, I don't know how I could have carried it out. However, the men didn't know that, and they just gave that foreign chap a hint that made him throw down the knife pretty quick. I stuck the blade in my shirt, as if I'd carried one there all my life, and the whole set was like lambs the rest of the day. They almost earned a fair day's wage by a fair day's work, which is saying more for them than I've ever been able to say before.

"You see I'm nearly a head and shoulders taller than any of them, let alone the breadth," added the young farmer irrelevantly while he pulled himself together with naïve pride in his own splendid proportions.

"But it's the sulks that are more difficult to fight than the tantrums, as you'll know, sir. They'll grumble at everything the day through, the food, the sleeping accommodation, the distance from the public house, no music halls for night, no street corners for seeing your pals, no

Hyde Park oratory for Sunday, no nothing, as they say. Then they're making the two or three real countrymen, which are all the agitators left me when last they passed this way, as surly and ill-conditioned as themselves. Paint London as a Paradise, they do, a Paradise which you must get to by any hook or crook so long as you do get there. I found the worst of them preaching this doctrine the other day in my hayfield, with every inch of the sky above saying there was a storm coming on, and there the rest stood leaning on their pitchforks and listening to him.

"I called out when I got near: 'Yes, it's a Paradise, your London about Whitechapel way, that's what it is'; then I shot out my finger and said: 'And there's the man that's talking to you, he's a seraph straight from Paradise, he is!' And when they all turned their eyes on the fellow and saw him standing there, unwashed, unkempt unshaven, with evil, hang-dog look and slouching shoulders, they all gave a great guffaw, as I meant they should. Then I further improved the occasion by saying, 'And the rain will be down on us in half an hour, and if this hay is under cover before it comes, there'll be an extra allowance of beer all round to-night, and if it isn't under cover, there'll be only half the regular allowance.'"

Then, putting nonsense aside, Farmer West began to discourse learnedly on the apple-sucker, the psylla, as he called it, and the codlin moth and weevil and swine-fever and various other things that were troubling his farm.

From these he passed on to discuss the benefits that might have been conferred on the community but for the failure of the Park Royal Show. A few words were given on the new measures that were being set on foot for the purpose of grappling with and defeating the middleman, as has been done so successfully on the continent of Europe. Above all, the teacher and his pupil discoursed on the subject of co-operation, the want of which has set the British

farmer so woefully behind his brothers in other parts of the world.

The young giant in corduroys got plenty of information on these and other matters from his honoured mentor before he drove home in the dusk that night, but he didn't get his milkmaid, for the only young lady who presented herself at the hiring fair that day said, at the end of a long discussion as to ways and means, that she thought after all she'd liefer try one of the Aerated Bread Shops in London first. This she did, but proved too awkward and rough-handed for the work. When next news went of her to her home in the north, she was in the casual ward at St. Giles' and arrangements were being made to despatch her to her own county.

XI

“IT AIN'T THE MATERIALS, IT'S LABOUR THAT'S DEAR”

“THE house is our own, that's the worst of it,” said I one day to Marjory, my wife, “so we can't threaten to leave if it isn't put in order at once, as you can if you have that long-suffering being, a landlord, over your head. The place and all within it has been deteriorating hopelessly ever since we bought and furnished it, ten years ago,” I went on. “There are lots of things I could easily put right myself, but I really haven't time. Mine is a twelve hours' working-day, including journeys, as you know, and you can't get out hammer and paint-pot with much spirit after those twelve hours have passed.”

“Why can't we call in the Unemployed and give them a good dinner and a little money, then set them to work at the things?” said Marjory.

The dear child is hopelessly impracticable. She might as well have lived in the Middle Ages for anything she understands of the condition of the labour-market of to-day.

“They came to ask for subscriptions for the Cause this morning after you left,” Marjory went on. “I said I had only two shillings in the house. They said they wouldn't mind taking that, although it was not much to give. Then they showed me a list of the men on their books who are

out of work. It began with twenty plumbers. I said if one of the twenty would mend the pipe of our sink, I would willingly give him my two shillings.”

“Why, Marjory, what extravagance! I mended that sink-pipe for you last week for the fifth time.”

“Yes, dear, but it began to spout out again at me the very next day. I am fond of fountains but not in the scullery, and Jane says she shall give notice once more if we don’t see to it at once. I suppose men who write leaders aren’t good at plumbing, for none of the pipes have been in good order since you repaired them after that bad frost we had last winter.”

“How about your twenty plumbers?” said I, discreetly ignoring the allusion to my own profession.

“Oh, I suppose my two shillings wasn’t good enough, for the Unemployed Leader muttered something about Trades’ Unions and that not being the way they worked the thing. I suppose he thought it would spoil the look of his procession if there were only nineteen plumbers to march in it instead of twenty.”

Inspired by Marjory’s remarks, I made a list next day of all that needed doing in the house. The water-taps wanted new washers; there were half a dozen panes of glass broken or badly cracked; several tables and chairs were weak in the legs; keys were missing from some of the doors and cupboards; the hall-door was disgracefully blistered by the sun; one or two of the stair-rails were loose; certain mouse-holes needed stopping up with cement; there was a crying need for paint and whitewash, the springs of the sofas were past praying for, while the wall-papers were a disgrace to the owner of the place.

My list was of a length to alarm me, still when I asked old Postance, a local builder who went in for general house-repairs, what he would charge for putting my house in order, I was somewhat taken aback when he named the sum of £80.

"Well I have heard that building materials have gone up in price considerably of late," I remarked, "but I should not have thought even that would have brought the work up to £80."

"Bless you, sir," said Postance, the builder is an old friend, and is wont to insult me accordingly, "it ain't the materials; a few screws and a bit of colour and paint, that's only a matter of a few pounds. It's the labour that's gone up in price. When I've sent you a plumber, and a painter, and a paperhanger, and a plasterer, and a 'holsterer, and a glazier, and a carpenter, and a handy-man, and paid them for the work they've done, and the work they ought to have done, and the things they admit they've spoilt, and the things you and I know they've spoilt, there won't be much left for me out of your £80."

"But the Unemployed," I said. "Surely with the labour-market in the state that it is, you can get work done at small cost?"

The ancient builder tipped me a wink. He was, as I said, an old friend, likewise a thorough man of the world, kindly and good-humoured, but sharp and shrewd and knowing as you make them.

"My dear sir," said he, with much condescension, "you're a clever young gentleman and there's lots more of you as is the same, where you come from. Clever and interlectual, and highly cultervated as you calls it now, as if you was potaties or marrerfats, well, you're all that, but you ain't got no eyes and you ain't got no sense, not one of you, and you may just put that in your pipes from me and do as you like about it.

"Building materials *ain't* dear," he went on, while I squirmed for my kind, "building materials *ain't* dear, not in proportion. In the old days when my father and your grandfather was alive, you used to get a bit here and a bit there and your bills was bits of things too. Now your orders

is big and your business is big, so your bills is big too. That's all according to natur and to providence.

"An' there wasn't no free delivery in the old days when Queen Victordy, bless her, came to the throne, as inner-cent as you please. No free delivery, a lad 'ud run up, we didn't make much use of the post in those days, didn't trust it over much, well, a lad 'ud come and say, 'Your goods is a-waiting for you down at the docks and they're paid for 'cording to agreement, so you can get 'em or not as you please, but if you don't, some other chap soon will.'

"Then you gets your horse and cart and goes for them, arranging to pick up a bit or two for a neighbour on the way, and if it was gravel or lime and you shunted your own half out first, small blame to you if it was the littlest half as remained behind.

"That's what we call enterprise, early-bird-and-worm sort of business. Well, now-a-days, the price of horse and cart and man, not as man cost much in those times, is added to your bill and you sez :

"'Lor, how building materials is riz !'

"Then, now-a-days, everything is handed over to you fair and square and true to a T. I'm blest if the finish of the work as they make it now, ain't beautiful. Why I knocked up an outhouse for a working-gardener t'other day and the look of the iron girders and stanchions I used for him, was such that your young missis might have put 'em in her best droring-room for ornaments.

"Now in the old days, you got your own materials 'ome into your own back-yard, then you set to work to make them fit for your purpose. You had your own saw-pit in one corner, and another corner fenced off for stone-cutting. All that's done for yer now, and it don't make yer bills no less, nor yet it hadn't oughter.

"Why, my grandfather, no better man nor me, for he hadn't to fight Trades' Unions, nor didn't see all his best

men leave him in the thick of the season to join the Unemployed, as is done every day in the week now, well, my grandfather had a track of land in St. John's Wood, half as big as Kensington Gardens. You went into it by a kissing-stile at one side and at the other no boundary-wall was needed, for it gave onto the marshy ground that they've made since into Regent's Canal. Later on, they put up a few score smart houses on his yard and those of his neighbours, each with its own garden, and they called it the Eyre Estate, but in grandfather's time it was all took up with the yards.

"I did a good business in my younger days before this cruel rheumatiz tacked itself on to me, but I could foot it across my premises in a few score paces and I was paying a matter of £40 a year ground-rent. Well, that ground-rent comes inter my bill for building materials too, for I don't need a building-yard seeing all this work's done for me, and that makes it what I said at first, building materials ain't dear, not considering.

"An' they building materials, as I was saying, is just a picter, and has got to be too. T'other day I put up a flight of steps for a lady from her drorin'-room winder to her garden, and when they was delivered and stacked one top of the other for me, I jes passed my hand up and down the sides of 'em, and there wasn't the hundredth part of an inch differ between them. Smooth as satin was the edges, each one square to the t'other, cut straight and true by machinery, and if they hadn't er been, I'd have said: 'Contrack's broken! What'll yer allow me off?'

"Now in the old days, they'd have come to me all lengths and all thicknesses, and if I'd been paid by my lady with good profit, I'd have squared 'em up for her in my building-yard. If not, I'd have let 'em make shift as they was.

"No, young sir," Postance always threw my youth in my

face when he felt his own position was specially sure, "building materials ain't dear, not all things taken inter account. It's only labour as is dear, and for why? 'Cause you're much better off if you've got no work to do. 'Cause you've a finer time of it now, if you're unemployed."

"It's quite true," I said thoughtfully, "now there's my new book which I want to bring out at sixpence. Well, paper can be had for nothing at the present time, but labour is so costly that they say I shall have to sell 50,000 copies before the thing does much more than pay its own expenses."

"And making so bold, sir," said Postance whimsically, "you must have written a very good book indeed if 50,000 people is going to want for to buy it."

I sacrificed another leg by aiming a chair at the old man's head.

"But how about my tables and sofas?" said I after this diversion, for though I felt I was listening to the old builder's prehistoric reminiscences for my amusement, I am a modern man and place my own interests first.

"When tables and sofys gets weak in the legs, now-a-days," said the builder stolidly, "best thing is to fling 'em into the fire. Labour's so dear now and so hard to get, that they're not worth doing nothing with. It's cheapest to buy new ones."

"But mine are good chairs and tables," said I with dignity, "none of your modern rubbish, but things that I brought from my old home where they were placed eighty years ago."

"If they're Chippendale and Sheraton, which I've set eyes on 'em and they ain't," said old Postance, "then it's worth while to have 'em faked up. If they're not, use 'em till they drops, or till they drops you, then make 'em into firewood, for, as I said, work's so hard to get done now-a-days, it's not worth having."

"If you don't go by me and leave bad alone, sir, you'll lose

so much time looking for a cabinet-maker who doesn't want to be found, as who'd rather be left alone with his leisure, and so much over the chairs themselves, and so much by spoilt material, and so much by damage of everything within arm's length of your workman, and so much in time, superintending labour as isn't worth superintending, and so much in patience, in trying to put it right after you've paid off your man, and so much in temper in swearing at the things because you can't put 'em right, that you'll end by making a bonfire out of them just to spite yourself.

"Did yer never look in at a sale by auction, sir?" he went on, "why do you suppose chairs and tables a long sight better'n yours, get sold for sixpence-halfpenny! Just because they've got a spring gone or a crink in the leg, that a man such as I used to work with side by side at the bench fifty years ago, could have put right for you in a couple of hours, for a matter of one-and-six and a few pence more for material. But that man's son and grandson don't know how to use their tools nor yet their brains, and what's more they don't want to learn, so the chairs and tables goes to the hammer or to the second-hand furniture shop in the back street, where they'll be sold for a song, all along of that spring gone or that crink in the leg.

"As for the pipes in your bathroom and your back-kitchen and the new washers on your taps, I'll come and see to those myself, just to save your pocket, which wouldn't be saved if I let one of them plumbers as I employ loose on you. I'll see to it as soon as ever my rheumatiz lets me, and I hope you won't have the water-company down on you before it's done.

"It's the same all through," Postance concluded reflectively. "In my young days a binder used to call round to bind your books; now they goes to the dustman when they slips from their stitching, for the binder he charges so much, he ain't worth sending for. Same with your pots

and pans, same with your bed-linen and garden-tools, same with your old coat, as I notice, sir, yours is getting a bit white about the seams, as you'll have to throw it away^{soon}, for, labour being so dear, it's not worth the mending."

Here, fearing the rest of my wardrobe might come off as badly at the hands of Postance as had my other household gods, I thrust half-a-crown into his twisted palm and bade him good-day.

The builder bit the coin, from absence of mind only, I hope, and said reflectively: "Two-and-six, two-and-six, thank yer, sir, and you'll find my advice cheap at the price. Building materials, they's cheaper nor they ever was, all things considered, but labour, that's dear, that's very dear, that's *damned* dear, and it's the curse of the country as it is so."

XII

“ ‘FROM THE COUNTRY, AIN’T YOU, MA’AM?’
SAID THE POLICEMAN ”

“ WHAT are we to do, George? We can’t go on in this way ! ”

George West was a brilliant young fellow from the Isis, Double First and so on, and when he got on the big Daily with £500 a year and extras, he thought he had a right to marry the girl of his heart and bring her home.

So he did it.

Two years later, this big Daily went smash. That is, it did not go smash, but it had to bow its gallant head before a babe which assumed the dimensions of a giant in a single night, and which gathered in all the harvest for which West’s Daily, among others, had toiled and struggled for nearly a hundred years.

Of course, it was all fair and square, and was nobody’s fault, only that of the omnipotent spirit of centralisation of the age. Still, it was a little hard on some hundreds of pressmen, printers, papermakers, type-setters, typists, clerks, and the rest, who were turned out on the streets through no fault of their own, some of them having no chance of ever again coming off those streets in the term of their natural life.

One mustn’t blame Providence, but when Providence ranges itself on the side of the big battalions, in the by-

ways of peace as well as the highways of war, one feels a little puzzled and a little sore.

Men who had married and set up comfortable homes of their own, relying on the stability of that Daily, were now raking in fortunes of five shillings a day, and George West was lucky to find that his talent and reputation for energy, hard work, and other things had secured for him a berth at forty-five shillings a week.

Mrs. George was a plucky little woman. She said she didn't mind being poor; she knew all about it, because, before she married, she used to slum with her mother. We have all heard how much good Lady Edith Northwest did in Seven Dials before she was carried off by typhoid through going to see those people on the Vaughan estate. The sanitary inspectors had forgotten to see to the Vaughan drains, which were about as ancient as the House of Vaughan itself. Those same inspectors looked at the drains in some other houses in the town six times in ten years to make up for their forgetfulness in the first direction.

The day Mrs. George asked what they were to do, George had come home to the house they now occupied in Kilburn and found his wife, who was a delicate little thing, had fainted while in the act of cooking his chop. It gave him rather a shock to see his Eva lying there, with her head in the coal-scuttle, while the baby, who had sought refuge from the general discomfort on the inner side of the fender, was yelling lustily because he had found that those pretty red cinders hurt when you take them up in your fingers.

After establishing Eva on the couch and silencing the baby as effectually as could be expected of mere man, George ruefully cooked his own chop. He was not much of a cook, and he did not enjoy either the preparing or the eating of this triangle of meat. However, Eva, bless her, added a relish to the meal by giving a little pale smile

and reminding him what a clever chef she had become since the reverses came.

"Look here!" said George, savagely, when he had finished his brief and unsavoury dinner, "I'm not going down to that office again till I've got someone to look after you and the kid."

"I went to Mrs. East again yesterday," said Eva, "but she said she wouldn't think of coming for less than half-a-crown a day, or ten shillings a week, leaving out Sunday."

"Then she must have ten shillings a week," said George, doggedly. "I don't mean to come home and find my wife with her head in the coal-scuttle again, for all the Mrs. Easts in this captivating Kilburn. Do you hear, Eva, you're to go out and engage her the first thing to-morrow."

"George, dear, how can we? Ten shillings a week when we've only got forty-five ourselves, and baby needs such a lot of things, and the woman demands beer money as well. Then, her appetite is huge, and she always empties the sugar-basin before she leaves into that horrid bag she brings with her. She even put the soap into it, among other things, last time she was here."

"Tilt the bag over next time and shame the creature in her own eyes, if it's possible."

"I did try to once," said Eva, "but I hadn't the courage. You wouldn't either if she glared at you as she does at me. I get awfully frightened sometimes, and when I'm in a funk, Baby finds it out at once. Then he howls."

"Poor darlings!" said George. "But surely some of these wretched unemployed have got wives who will work for less than ten shillings a week, with food and beer money and captured sugar thrown in. I met a procession of them this morning. Haven't they got any wives among them?"

"Oh yes, lots, but none who will work for less than my

Mrs. East. Let's emigrate to Holland, George, I hear you can get women there who work for eight hours a day and half time on Sundays, and you only pay them three shillings a week. We could afford that, couldn't we?

"I engaged one woman lately," she went on, "I forgot to tell you about it, such a nice gentle little person, and she agreed to work for me for half a day, three times a week. She came once, and I was so pleased because she was in the house three hours without breaking anything and she let me help her with the work, which most of them hate. Well, at a quarter past five, when she was having tea, her husband came for her and he did make such a big vulgar row, swear words and all kinds of things. It seems she had told him she was coming to me and put his tea all ready, only leaving him to boil the water for himself, but the great hulking brute said two o'clock till five was quite long enough for half a day's work, and anyhow she was to go home with him and see to his tea, or he'd give her something she wouldn't like. Then when I was giving the poor thing her money, he snatched it out of her hand and said, 'What's this!' Just as the cabmen do. He frightened me so much that when next I saw the wife, I crossed the street for fear he should be near, although I did want those half days' work badly."

"What about that grim-faced widow you had once or twice last week?"

"Oh, she refused to come again. She said the Friendly Society and the Parish and some old ladies she knew 'was that kind, as they had oughter be to a widow like her,' that it wasn't necessary for her to go out to work any more. She evidently didn't buy her own coals, for she had a huge fire, as big as those our parlourmaid used to make for us in June before we came to Kilburn. The widow was not much loss, for she took two hours to clean a window and another two hours or more to wash the kitchen floor; then she threw away half the suet I got for a pudding, saying

it was all skin and no good, and spilt more oil on the floor in filling the lamp than she put inside, and she burnt the milk for Baby's bottle. I forget what else she did, but I know I decided it was not worth while to have her again. I changed my mind later on, however, when I found I could not get anyone better."

George smoked on in silence for a time, then burst out with one of the brilliant ideas with which, as Eva said, the bowl of his pipe was always filled.

"Look here!" said he, "why shouldn't we have a married couple, wife to do the housework and husband to have his own calling and live here rent free? The one merit of this old place is that it's roomy; we'd leave the lower part to them absolutely, three good rooms and the wash-house. They'd have the sole right of entry by the area, so they'd have their own private particular front door, which I daresay these people prize as much as we do. We'd bind ourselves by solemn oaths never to enter their quarters. We'd supply all gas and coal, within reason; of course they'd board themselves, and we'd give the wife a fair, but not excessive, wage, as she'd score through the husband having to pay neither rent nor firing."

"I've thought of that too, George," said Eva, who was quite a superior person, "I've tried to set lots more things on foot than I've mentioned to you. You see you're so little at home, there's no time to talk much. I don't wonder they say pressmen work longer hours than anyone in the country. Your average was fifteen hours a day last week, including Saturdays."

"How about the married couple?" returned George. "There's the Corps of Commissionaires, their representative was asking for support at our office the other day and we all agreed that men who had done well by their King and Country, and so on, ought to be considered. The corps is a glorious institution, let's support it and benefit ourselves at the same time. An old soldier's a very decent fellow,

he'd be glad to see his wife installed in such a house as this."

"Do smoke to me a little and let me talk," said Eva, who had vainly tried to stem her consort's flow of eloquence. "Of course I thought of the Commissionaires first thing, because I once saw them reviewed at the Royal Hospital and fell in love with every one of them. I thought if only their wives looked as neat and sensible and workmanlike as they did, we need only get one here and be happy ever afterwards."

"And you applied at their barracks in the Strand?"

"Yes, and they said that married couples so readily find employment as caretakers of offices, that they seldom enter domestic service except at very high wages. At an office, you see, the wife has nothing to do except sweep out and dust for an hour in the morning, and the husband can't be overwhelmed with what he has to do, so with high wages and a good home thrown in, it isn't likely they'd care to come and help on the life of hard-working people such as you and me."

"I've always had the greatest respect for the Corps," remarked George, "but I shall now only continue to entertain it, when I hear they have doubled their numbers, so as to take in some few hundreds more who'll be content to share with the majority a fair living wage and a good home. We all like cream, but when we can't get it, we're thankful for skim milk, and I never take up a paper without finding myself reproached on account of the red-coat, who I am told goes ravening about the world in search of employment and finding none."

"I don't blame the soldier," said Eva, loyal to her colours as are all women, "but I think the Corps ought to be pitched into for not extending its operations."

"Then there's the Army and Navy Pensioners' Employment Society, in Southampton Street, why not go there?"

You'd have the whole resources of the country at your disposal."

"Oh, I tried them too, but was told my offer wasn't good enough, though I painted the place in the rosiest of hues, said the rooms should be either furnished or unfurnished, as they desired, that no service would be asked of the husband, and the wife should have plenty of liberty and by no means too much work. They said they had no couples who cared for my offer and referred me to another society, where I was snubbed in the same manner. The snubs were administered in all courtesy of course, still they were very decided snubs all the same."

"And yet," said George, taking up his evening paper, "here's one soldier in the workhouse as usual, and some more marching with the unemployed. A retired redcoat and his wife could live on very little indeed if they came to us in this way. There's something wrong somewhere. Not for worlds would I say anything against the defenders of my country, but there's something wrong somewhere."

"Having failed with the Army and Navy," Eva went on, "I dived down lower, but the results were not encouraging. If the organisations that I called on next, were able to guarantee the wife's sobriety, they couldn't vouch for that of the husband, and *vice versa*. Honesty and cleanliness, of course, run in couples in the case of married people, but sobriety doesn't. One pair seemed promising, but they had written out a list as long as my arm, of the conditions which must be fulfilled if they were to condescend to enter our house. Then a second remonstrated at being called on to work hard all day for so insignificant a wage. I said her active duties would only fill a few hours, that between half past two and half past six, she would never be expected to do anything but a little light needlework.

"'Needlework!' she shouted in disgust. 'Oh, ma'am, I hates needlework! If I must be doing, I'd rather scrub your floors!'

"Several of those who applied, said the same thing in different words. The loathing of the needle seems to be a feature of the present day. Why don't our County Council schools take the example of the French; no girl can get a *brevêt de capacité* in the public examinations across the Channel, unless she can net and knit and darn and stitch, and I'm sure their intellect doesn't suffer from it.

"However," Eva went on, "that's all by the way. Well, with each new applicant, my demands grew more modest. At last I had to hold myself in check lest I should promise that I would myself cook the husband's eggs and bacon at the same time I did yours in the morning, if only he and his wife would consent to come and live under our roof."

"You applied to the Rector?"

"Yes, dear old man, I always imagined he was two generations in the rear of the age, and my application proved that it was so. He was delighted with the idea, said he would send me twenty-four couples in twenty-four hours, and congratulated me on the magnificent manner in which, he declared, I had solved the single-servant problem. This, he said, was puzzling every cleric in London, as they could not hope that girls would be good and good-tempered, and all the other things they should be, if they spent their whole life in toilsome solitude, with a restricted exeat half-a-dozen times a month. I left contradiction for another occasion, and asked him to send round his two dozen married couples for inspection at once."

"You must be somewhat hard to please if you could not find one who would do out of twenty-four," said George.

"Well, in every single instance the husband was out of work and from his manner and appearance, I should say it was tolerably certain he would remain out of work, and of course I didn't bargain to board my couple entirely out of the wife's wages, as well as lodge and fire them. Also I

thought it would be a direct incentive to dishonesty to introduce two penniless persons into a house with no means of support, except the few shillings a week I proposed to give the wife.

"One applicant said she supposed I would not object to her husband taking her place in my part of the house if she got an offer of a day's charring for herself elsewhere. Another difficulty was that not one would give a straightforward answer when I asked if they would be likely to stay on with me, if the husband found work after his arrival here. I said that to the more respectable of the applicants, as I thought perhaps you might find some occupation that would enable the man to support himself, as he had no rent to pay and his wife would be earning a little money. However, I saw they all meant to only come till the bad moment was past, and would desert as soon as ever work was found.

"One woman said she didn't know how to clean windows. I volunteered to instruct her, but she said perhaps her husband would help. He said, well, he wouldn't mind dusting them over a bit inside now and again; he supposed I wouldn't want more than that. Then they all thought a great deal more of the desirability of the rooms I proposed to give them, than of their ability to do my work. There was only one couple who seemed really keen on securing the place. They were dear old things, but both so crippled they had to be helped upstairs. They wept in each other's arms when I decided they would not suit, and said I was their last chance, and now they supposed they must go to the workhouse. They did not look as if they deserved the workhouse either, and as they said they had several children, I asked if they couldn't help them, but they only looked unhappily at each other and remained silent. I'm afraid the children were brutes!

"Finally," Eva went on, "I went over to Earl's Court to consult Dora, as I suddenly remembered she told me

she had tried married couples as servants. Her experiences were not encouraging, for they proved that unless the wife drank, or the husband was absolutely worthless, no couple would come on terms that could be offered by Dora and me, or any other sufferer from impecuniosity. Dora also said there was one serious result of engaging people in this way, which I had overlooked. This was that the moment the wife began to earn and there was no question of rent to pay, the husband ceased to bring money home. Thus, away in a flight went all my visions of the woman being able to have a little independent pocket-money to put by for a rainy day. Dora said each housekeeper in turn, and she tried many, came to her either in a rage or in tears, saying that instead of being more prosperous, she was less so than when she lived where there was rent to provide, and in addition to that she had all this extra work to do. Thus, very naturally, she preferred to resign the post. Dora said in the end she was afraid she had been the means of driving a whole horde of husbands into evil ways.

"She used to advertise in turn for a couple without children, with only two or three children, and with not too many children, but she got few replies and rarely any which were in the least satisfactory. Men who had been in the Army and their wives often replied, but they generally proved to be those whom the Corps of Commissioners and Army Pensioners would not, for obvious reasons, take on their books.

"One housekeeper, whom Dora had named Phoenix, as, though bad, she was so much better than the rest, finally gave her a shock which cured the poor little thing of ever making another attempt. She had one day rung many times in vain, and was running downstairs to find out the cause, when, looking over the balustrade, she saw her housekeeper lying flat on her back in the hall with horrible glassy eyes turned up to the ceiling. Little Dora

was alone in the house at the time, and she thought the woman was dying or dead. She tried to pour brandy down the creature's throat, fanned her assiduously, and placed a pillow from the drawing-room sofa under her head, then opened the door and hailed a passing policeman, though she was rather in a funk lest he should say the woman's illness was her fault. The man examined the patient leisurely, then he said :

" 'You're from the country, aren't you, ma'am ?' "

" 'Yes,' said Dora, though she thought the inquiry somewhat irrelevant. 'I only came to live in London when I married a year ago.' "

" 'I thought so,' said the policeman : 'and now, would you like me to take this 'ere to the police station, or leave it lying about till the Master comes home ?' "

"The woman was drunk, of course, and after that Dora decided to give up casuals and do as she could till she and Hal could afford to pay really high wages, when they mean to get a Commissionaire who has been an officer's servant and who has married a good cook. Dora has been told those make the best attendants going ; still, she thinks there ought to be a few second-best couples in the Corps for those who can only afford to pay second-best wages."

"I've been an optimist all my life," said George West, speaking irrelevantly, after the manner of the policeman, as he filled his pipe. "The fellows at the office say that's why I always fall on my feet ; but I'm now beginning to have doubts about my generation."

"It's a very nice generation," said Eva, with all the positiveness of a woman on a point as to which she knows little. "But it will be much nicer by the time our baby is a man and they have trained all those jolly little boys and girls we see at the clubs and gymnasiums and Boys' Brigades, and so on, into the splendid sort of men and women they are going to be in the future."

XIII

“‘HELL GET A BISCUIT TIN AT HIS HEAD,’”
SAID BELL BLUDGEON

MISS EAST has of late years had Luncheon Clubs formed for herself and her sisters.

She accepts invitations to these with a certain negligent superiority.

The Clubs are the making and salvation of her, did she but know it, but not for those reasons does she frequent them.

Her hostess takes a large room close to some biscuit or match factory. She screens off one end to form a kitchen, fits it up with a gas stove, puts in tables and chairs, and if she be in touch with the right people in the west, she imports a piano.

Next she enlists the services of Mrs. East as char-lady.

Mrs. East is not sure that she cares to demean herself by scrubbing for the likes of the expected guests ; however, if she is assured the work is done for the hostess, and not for them young hussies with their stuck-up ways, she doesn't mind doing it to oblige.

“To oblige” is an expression which carries much comfort to the mind of Mrs. East. It implies that she, and she only, can help you in your presumed trouble. It allows her to come to her work late and to leave it early.

It gives her a right to rations of super-excellence, to extra consideration during the day and to an additional tip at the end of it. Above the whole, there is, moreover, a halo of immense consideration on her part, as though she were working for you on this occasion from kindness alone. All this and more, is included in Mrs. East's promise to come to oblige.

Till taught better, you make the dire mistake of proclaiming the luncheon-room free. Then you lunch there alone, save for mocking face and gibing voice in the doorway.

Grown wiser, you impose a weekly subscription of two-pence a head and a penny off for two weeks to whosoever brings in a recruit. Four recruits turn the recruiter into a sergeant. Thus the ball rolls on.

The kitchen and gas-stove turn out dinners cheaper and more tasty each day, but Miss East has no good word for your cooking. She hankers after the Sardine and the Herring from without.

This problem she solves for herself.

"We'll bring in our own dinners from outside, Miss, and hot 'em up on your stove, that's best."

So in swims Sir Sardine, triumphant here as elsewhere.

You insert the thin edge in the form of floury potato and steamy suet-pudding exuding jam, laid ready on the dresser, and by-and-bye you may land the Sardine as an entrée only, but not yet.

Sir Sardine is not your only difficulty. Miss East is exclusive and knows what is due to her caste.

"What I, a Biscuit-girl, eat with a Match-maker! Never!" and she and her sisters resign in a body.

Negotiations of a subtlety unknown to the Diplomatic Corps ensue, and for three days the Club-room remains empty.

Three Match-girls are hurled down the staircase by infuriated Biscuit-makers and the fringes on the shawls

and the brows of the latter, are burnt off in retaliation by the natural weapons of their opponents.

The hostess keeps the police at bay by main force.

Then all suddenly drop into line. Biscuit-makers enter and leave the Club first for three days in the week, and Match-girls take precedence on the other three. The tables for the first factory are ranged at the one end of the room, those for the second stand at the other.

Peace is restored and no one happens to ask why the humorous hostess has set the salt-box on a pedestal between the laden boards.

During the luncheon-hour, the hostess plays and sings to her guests and the viands are generally disposed of in time to allow of a dance or a round game before work is resumed.

It is first and foremost for the sake of the dance that the Club is frequented. Romping, as a rule, is discountenanced. "Do it graceful, now!" one will say reproachfully to another if a high kick is attempted.

Some prefer conversation.

"Tell us about the theatres at your side of the town, Miss."

"Well, I'm not very rich, you know. I don't often go to the theatre. It's six months since I last saw a play."

"La, Miss, how funny! We go two or three times a week."

"Why do you wear that old hat when you come to see us, Miss?"

"It isn't an old hat. It's nearly new and I always wear a plain one in the morning and when I'm out on business."

"You don't call it business to come and see us, do you Miss?" this in hurt surprise, to allay which much tact is needed.

Then the hostess to a pale delicate girl with the fragile beauty and look of refinement one so often sees over here,

and which is so much more apparent under the plain sailor than under the shadow of the ostrich :

"Well, Millie, and how did you enjoy that week with my friends in the country?"

Miss Courtesy : "It was orful nice, Miss." Then in truthful parentheses, "But lor, Miss, it was mortal dull."

Again, to a poor little pavement-girl who announces her intention of breaking off her engagement to a stalwart young milkman, he having threatened to exile her to the country after marriage :

"But, Hetty, wouldn't you like a garden of your own where you could grow your own peas and parsley?"

"La, miss, but think of the time they takes to grow, and after working hard for a month, you'd only get as much as you could run out and buy in the market for a tanner."

Having no contradiction ready, you leave the continuation of the subject for another time.

A more serious matter sometimes discussed in the Club luncheon-room, is a proposed strike.

Some scoundrel got into a ready-made clothing-factory and persuaded the girls that the ten to fourteen shillings a week which they earned, according to age, was unworthy of their acceptance.

"As the gentleman said hisself, Miss," explained the displayer of the grievance, "if you has to pay five shillings a week for rent, and a poor place at that, where are you when you want to get your grub and your clothes?"

"But which of you does pay four shillings a week for rent?" asks the hostess.

"We do, and us, and us," replies a chorus of voices.

"Wait a moment," says the hostess. "Your rooms cost five or six shillings each, I know, but as four of you girls share them together, that only comes to a shilling or so each, while those that live at home don't pay much more. And you, Laura and Mary, now that I have got your landlord to let me put a doorway between those two nice little

rooms in Grant Street, you only pay seven shillings for the two and six of you sleep there and you are very cosy."

"Right she is," nodded one guest approvingly to another.

"And you can live very well indeed on five shillings a week if you go by the list I gave you, and if you get plenty of milk at the right place and only sardines on Saturday," the hostess went on.

To this also assent, though somewhat reluctantly, was given.

"And now that you have left off wearing ostrich feathers and keep your thick coats and skirts for winter and have nice cool cotton skirts and blouses in summer, your clothes don't cost very much. You only paid two shillings for having that pretty frock made the other day, didn't you, Alice?"

"Yes," said the proud Alice, drawing herself up that the cut of her vest might be admired.

"And you all got a week at the sea last year, with the pennies you put into the Club Country-Fund, didn't you? and it will be a fortnight this year if you spend a little less on sweets.

"Now if you go out on strike," the wily hostess went on, "there'll be no sweets, and no theatre, and no club, and no seaside visit, and no fires in the little rooms at night, and no nice warm coats for winter, for they'll all be in the pawn-shop."

"Look here," said a big, heavy, beetle-browed girl as she shouldered the bag in which she had brought her lunch. "If that there rascal in the black coat comes sneaking up to my factory with his talk of strikes again, he'll get a biscuit-tin at his head, so there!"

And feeling she had voiced the opinion of her fellows, Bell Bludgeon marched away at their head, while the two o'clock bell, touched by the hand of the Astronomer Royal at Greenwich, clanged out noisily above them.

XIV

“ ‘TOM, HE’S NINETEEN, HE’S GETTING HISSELF MARRIED NEXT WEEK.’ ”

“ WELL, Mrs. East, I hope you are glad to see an old friend again. What have you been doing with that big family of yours since I last saw you? I hope you have put them all to good trades, and that they are doing well.”

“ Well, ma’am, we’re not none of us doing so well as we could wish, not just now.”

“ I’m very sorry to hear that. I suppose that is the reason you have left your nice little flat in the Repton Buildings, where you had a balcony and all?”

“ Well, ma’am, it wasn’t want of work like, that drove us out o’ the Buildings. There was all them stairs, and such a lot o’ waste space like, it gave you too much to do. We’re much better suited with two rooms and a bit, as is what we ’as now.”

“ You think two rooms and a bit is best! But there are eight or nine of you, you can’t really like that better than the flat.”

“ Which, ma’am, you’ve no call to turn up your nose at us because we likes what we likes. At the Buildings there was a kitchen as was no use at all, too small to put a dinner-table in it was, so we ’ad to eat our meals in the

parlour, and what's the use of a parlour if you've got no table free to put your chiny ornaments on ; and three bedrooms. What's the use of all getting your deaths a cold by sleeping only two or three in a room ?

"It was awful cold and lonesome, we was all afeared. What we likes is two or three tucked up warm and snug together, and all those rooms isn't needful when you're all friends together like, and not always a 'ittin' each other like some, and needin' yer rooms to yourself."

"So you didn't stay there very long after I helped you to fit the place up so nicely ?"

"No, ma'am, we clears out o' them Buildings as quick as we could. It wasn't only the size of it, they was always a interferin' with you there. Had to take your turn at cleanin' all them stairs, part of it once a week, yer had."

"And what are all your children doing now ?"

"Well, ma'am, they're most o' them out o' work at present. There's Tom, the eldest, he's nineteen, he's a night-porter, leastways he was when he was sixteen, but he's had no regular work since."

Appropriate remarks from the visitor.

"They tell him at the Labour Bureau he ought to make up his mind to learn a trade, for he might look all his life for a night-porter's place and not find one."

"And what did your Tom say to that ?"

"Well, Tom, he says a night-porter's work is good enough for him. He got a place as that once, and he doesn't see why he shouldn't again, and he gets an odd job now and then."

"But it's rather hard on you to have to support him between the odd jobs, isn't it ?"

"Well, ma'am, it *is* hard, but it won't be for long now. Tom, he's going to get hisself married next week."

Further appropriate remarks.

"And Kate, is she doing well at her dressmaking ?"

"Oh, Kate, she gave *that* up a year ago, ma'am. She didn't like it. She likes house work better."

"Oh, then she's going into service. I'm so glad to hear that, it generally means a good home and a little money in the bank."

"My Kate, she wouldn't demean herself by going into service, ma'am, thank you. She's looking for a housemaid's place where she'd sleep at home."

"I never heard of a place where the housemaid slept at home. Does she think she has much chance of finding one?"

"Well, ma'am, as she's been inquirin' of for hard on a year now, she thinks she's sure to hear of one before long."

The appropriate remarks begin afresh.

"And what are you going to do with Jack?"

"Oh, he's doing *very* well, ma'am. He's only fifteen, but he gets his seven shillings a week and his tea regular at a greengrocer's, and there's often an extra sixpence on Saturday. It's a great help to us all, that is."

"Yes, but when he's too old for the greengrocer's, and when he finds seven shillings a week isn't enough for a man to live on, what then?"

"There you go, ma'am, you talk just like the Employment Committee up at Holborn. They're always at Ben and me to pay them a premium so as Jack can be taught a trade. But, as they says themselves, he won't earn as much as seven shillings a week and his tea, not for years to come, so it isn't likely we'd bring him away from the greengrocer's for that."

"But when he'd learnt a trade he'd have it for the rest of his life. We must all think of the future, you know."

"The present's quite enough for us, ma'am, thank you. We'll leave the future for them as lives to see it."

Repetition of appropriate remarks.

"And little Peter, how old is he now?"

"Thirteen, ma'am. He's come on wonderful since you last saw him. He's the smartest and brightest of the lot. Ben and me, we thinks a lot of Peter."

"Then I hope you'll do well by him. I suppose you will put him to a trade."

"No, ma'am; he's at the baker's now, three shifts a day, early morning, between schools and after tea. He gets his four shillings a week, and Rolls, that's the baker, will give more when Peter gets into the Sixth Standard and serves him full time. Rolls, he's not like some, he never sends his lads off, not if they're worth their screw, till they are seventeen."

So smart, bright little Peter is to be turned out on the streets, without a trade like the rest, when he is seventeen.

"And Matilda, is she doing well at that haberdasher's where we found her a place?"

"No, ma'am. Tilly, she didn't like the haberdasher's. Up early, home late; out in the morning in all weathers, and always some one at your heels to see as you kept to your work. She says it isn't worth it, so she came away as soon as she got her second month's wages in her fist."

Appropriate remarks.

"No, she hasn't had a place since, not reg'lar, though she often goes to the laundry when they wants an extra hand. But our Till, she was that well-edicated at the School-board, that she likes nothing so much as reading. She's a very good customer at the Marine Stores, where she'll buy every penny magazine she can get hold of for a half-penny each, and when she's read 'em, she'll sell 'em back to the Stores at two a farthing. That's good business for both of 'em.

"But I says to her sometimes, 'Lor, Tilly,' says I, 'what'll you do when you're married and have seven or eight children to look after like me, if you're improving

your mind with them books all day long, instead of scrubbing the floors and cooking the bacon. What good'll your fine edication and your Sixth Standard have done for you then? Tell me that.'"

"And Roger, he was the little fellow I liked best of them all, what is he doing?"

"Oh, ma'am, I—I—I hoped you'd have forgotten to ask about Roger. Excuse me crying, ma'am, but I jist can't help it. They—they have put my Roger into a Reformatory, they have! To think that I should have a boy in a Reformatory!"

"Oh, Mrs. East, I am so sorry to hear this. What had poor little Roger done?"

"Just nothing at all, ma'am. It was only what they *said* as he'd done, the scoundrels. Called him such bad names, they did, a pessisstant absentee and the likes o' that, and said he was refectory and a tennancy to lawlessness."

"Still, he must have done something beyond staying away from school."

"Well, ma'am, he was just a bit wild, that was all. There was no harm in the lad. It was first a broken window, then a few apples off a tree, then pitch-and-toss, and knocking the cabbages and oranges down from the stalls, and upsetting the newspaper boards, and ringing the door bells, and in the end they shut him up. Oh, dear, oh dear, yes, they shut him up, they did."

"Never you mind, Mrs. East, don't you cry. I dare-say Roger will do better than any of them when he comes out. Reformatories aren't what they used to be. He'll be kept out of bad company and kept off the streets and they'll look after his health till he'll be twice the lad he was when he went in.

"They'll give him a good practical education, too, a far more useful one than he'd get at school, and they'll teach him a trade. They'll try him at first one thing and then

another, till they see what he likes and what he's fitted for, then they'll put him to that.

"Not half a dozen boys out of a hundred turn out badly now, after they've been in a Reformatory, and I saw a good deal of Roger two or three years ago and I know he won't be one of the half dozen. They'll keep an eye on him after he comes out too, and they'll see he doesn't take to loafing about the streets.

"Now good-bye, Mrs. East, and if any of the neighbours say anything to you about your Roger, just you reply that you know you'll be as proud of him as any of your children, some day, when they've made a decent lad of him."

"But it seems queer, ma'am, doesn't it, that they should have to send a boy to a Reformatory when they want to make a decent lad of him?"

"It is queer, Mrs. East, but in many cases it's quite true."

"And considering that two of the County Council's Reformatories cost about as much to maintain as Eton and Harrow," said the visitor to herself as she walked away, "it is only right that they should do our poor little street failures some good with their money."

XV

“‘BOYS IS SCARCE, SIR!’”

LATER on, Baby West, whose years are now expressed in two figures, goes to school. Here he learns for the first time what real restriction means.

His little soul is a thing he may not call his own. Up by the clock, to bed by the clock, to work by the clock, to play by the clock, and no pleasant straying about till the first dreary ten minutes of dinner have passed, and, your seniors' greedy needs being satisfied, you may win attention to your own. Punctuality very literally rules the roast and your own slice may be scanty as well as cold if you are not ready for it at school when it is ready for you.

Then for each lapse from duty's path there waits the birch, an instrument compared to which, being spanked by nurse's stinging palm was a treat.

At the first onslaught, before you learn wisdom, you cling to your bully's arm and implore him to stop. He is deaf and indifferent, for the one argument which would appeal to him, that which young East would have used when the first shadow of the switch fell across his back, is unknown to young West.

The latter is not aware that if he be flogged, the law of the land gives him a right to bring an action for assault against his persecutor, and that for each blow, he may get the latter sentenced to a day or a bob.

No, such redress is not for him, and be his name Balfour, or Rosebery, or what, he learns to take his whack like a man.

Moreover, as soon as little West gets to school, he has to learn to play organised games.

Now there is nothing extreme youth loathes so frankly as organised games. There is some sense, says East, in tip and run with the probability of having to scamper away for breaking your neighbour's windows, but regular cricket, with all that nonsense about letting the other fellow keep his bat till he's been caught out, even though he's smaller than you are! What rot!

Compulsory football too! Think of spending your Saturday afternoon at compulsory football. Young East would turn from the suggestion in amused contempt, even if he did not take you before the magistrate for having tried to enforce it. As for two hours' prep. after tea when you might be loafing round with marbles or a roller skate on your right foot! No, it would be "I'm off," for me, and let the teacher prep. for himself.

East has heard, too, that young Master West up at the Hall, has a holiday-task set him each term before he leaves school, and is under the rule of a holiday tutor in the summer. Well the chap must be a duffer if he didn't show that tutor the door as soon as he put his nose inside. Holiday task! Catch him!

Young West's life is haunted a year or so later on, by the nightmare of competitive examination. At the wickets and in the swimming baths, as well as at first, second, and third school, his days are pursued by this spectre unless at those moments when he haply and happily forgets.

If he would enter the Army or Navy; if he would remain in the Army or Navy; if he would plead at the Bar; if he would walk the hospitals, or lie abroad for his country's good, in every route of life, he must vie with his fellows,

and all his fellows seem to be so much more be-brained than he.

Young East wots little of examinations. Truly there are those of the Council Council's School, but they concern his teachers more than himself. If he fails, so much the worse for the teacher.

A year or two after he has entered his teens, he attains or omits to attain the Sixth Standard, then he is free for life. Competition may win for him a better pitch for his coster's barrow, but it is competition of the biceps, not the brain. Competition may land him ahead of his fellows down at the docks, but it is competition of the shoulder blade, not of the text-book, and as such needs no mention here.

Young East's childhood, in the sense of his days of dependence, ends early. Too early, perhaps, just as those of his brother West end too late.

At the mature age of ten, he is already a wage-earner. The Humanitarian thinks that hard, but two or three hours on a quick wheeled milk-cart strengthened with as much milk as you like to swallow before you start, a leap down at the house-door and a dart back on to the swinging step, is no bad way of spending the early part of the day. This, provided you get to bed at a decent time at night, which East doesn't and never will.

The man who knows nothing about it, tells you with a tear in his voice, that you ought to pay thankfully for the privilege of providing free meals for this little weary toiler who had done a day's work before he arrived at school in the morning.

You retaliate that you might yourself be a little better off, if your own offspring could earn his breakfast and half-a-crown a week, besides tips, from the time he is ten years old. And from two-and-six to four-and-six is a quick transition, for the dairyman will not lightly part with a lad who has proved himself worth his salt. We are so greedy,

we others, we must have our milk betimes or the rival dairy will get a new customer.

East's younger brother earns about the same for distributing the morning papers.

"Very rough on you, my poor little chap, this hard work at your age."

"Oh, but you can play all the way as you go along, sir," says young East, too young as yet to act the hypocrite, and guilelessly confiding to you why your *Times* is so often late. "And mother lets me have sixpence every week out of my screw for myself," he adds cheerfully.

"And mother never knows how much the tips come to, does she?" inquired a Passer-by.

Young East tipped the last speaker a wink and liked him much better than his other friend, the Humanitarian.

"It's bad enough for those who can get the work," said the Humanitarian, taking up a new cue. "How about the poor little chaps who can't?"

"Did you ever study a morning paper that deals with those things?" said the Passer-by. "If not, get a copy and turn to the employment page. Begin at B, and you'll find 'Boy wanted,' Boy, Boy, Boy! to the end of the column. Then pass on to L and read 'Lad wanted,' Lad, Lad, Lad! till the column reaches the blank. End up with Y, 'Youth wanted,' Youth, Youth, Youth! till he too spins out his coil to the end.

"Then recall the tale, old, perhaps, but always new to some, of the precocious infant whose employer warned him that if he did not mend his ways he would be dismissed. Young Hopeful attempted no defence, no plea. All he said, hands in pocket, snub nose upturned, was, 'Boys is scarce, sir.'"

To this early emancipation is due the independence and self-sufficiency of the best type of working man. As has been said, it is "Tommy Atkins's tread which rules

India," and from the moment young East brings his first shilling home to the family till, he feels that he is man, ruler, lord of the earnings of his own right hand.

He has now a right to complain if the pudding be too hot or too cold. He has an answer ready if he be told to clear out while his mother scours the floor, if he be chidden because he takes more than his share of the family blaze. For him no longer is cuff or smack, word of counsel or hint of reprimand. He is now a pillar of the household, he is Wage-earner and Man.

West may urge that this present-day apotheosis of the boy, is fatal to his later interests as the adult, but the reply to that is, East is East, whether his home is within Whitechapel or without, whether his earnings be fifteen shillings a week or three pounds fifteen, and he must be left to work out his fate as seems to him best.

Old West, long as his experience may be, rarely realises that the more children East has, from the time their tenth year is reached, the better off he is. While this is being written the age limit is being changed, but before this can be printed it will be changed again, so let the statement pass. Even before then the children do their part in supporting a modest household. After that age, they quickly learn to support themselves.

The whining scoundrel with his cry of ten small children, will find listeners to the end, although half the children are filling their own larder according to the practice of the East in question; and East, throughout the present treatise, may be considered as including all those who enjoy the advantages of the Ratepayer without accepting the responsibilities of the Ratepayer.

If a family hang together, a middle-aged couple with seven or eight grown-up sons and daughters, of whom only three or four are married and away in homes of their own, will find themselves in extremely comfortable circumstances.

The father knocks the whole set up in the morning, and probably earns at least his own "keep" until he is well stricken in years. The mother cooks, cleans and mends for all; two rooms, or three at most, suffice for the household, the wardrobe expenses are slender, and when the rent is paid, the amount left for individual pocket money is large, even though Sunday's banquet does go on from one o'clock till four, as is usually the case when the house of East is in funds.

If drink, dirt, and general improvidence rule, they wreak their own bitter vengeance here as they would in every grade in life. An East-end priest who had spent an earnest and hard-working existence beyond Liverpool Street, in combating crime, disease, and disbelief, once admitted that there were not more than two or three in a thousand cases of distress which had ever come under his knowledge, that could not, directly or indirectly, be attributed to drink.

XVI

“HOUSE-ROOM GOES A-BEGGING”

WHENEVER the question of the Better Housing of the Working Classes is brought under my notice, I am asked to pity the man who has to support a wife and family on twelve shillings a week, out of which he must pay seven shillings a week for the rent of a single room.

Clever practical men repeat this farrago of nonsense time after time.

It always reminds me of a story told me by the late Bishop of Gibraltar.

“When I was a shy young curate,” said my lord spiritual, “there was an old woman in my parish who, whenever she saw me, bobbed a curtsey and said: ‘Please sir, all I has to live on is two-and-sixpence a week from the parish, and out of that I has to pay three-and-sixpence for rent and get my bread and my beer and whatever else I wants as well.’

“‘But my good woman,’ I used to say, ‘if you only get two-and-six a week, you can’t pay three-and-six for rent, let alone buy bread and beer.’

“‘But I’ve got to, sir, for all I’ve got is two-and-six a week from the parish and out of that I have to give three-and-six for rent, besides get my bread and beer.’”

The Bishop went on, with humour all his own, to explain that through the assistance of a coadjutor he

readjusted the finances of his parishioner. The latter then straightway became the terror of his life, since to show her gratitude, she took to attending every service in the church, Sundays and weekdays, and whenever she caught her benefactor's eye, or imagined she caught his eye, she jumped to her feet and bobbed him a series of curtseys in face of the whole congregation.

"The episode might delight me now," concluded the Bishop drolly, "but I was a shy young curate then."

Now passing over for a moment the City of the Aliens to the far east of Saint Paul's, that being the affair of the Immigration Bill, let us consider the other parts of the metropolis.

If Whitechapel alone raised the cry of all I earn must go in rent, Whitechapel could not be passed over, even if one touched on the fringe of the subject alone, but the same mournful echoes come from Bayswater and Bloomsbury, the Kilburns and the Kensingtons, from Chelsea, Marylebone and the many Hampsteads which lie to its rear, not to speak of the distant Brixtons and Brondesburys.

Now I maintain that in each and any of these localities, you may sojourn pleasantly without paying nearly as much as seven shillings a week, if such be your will. Of course those who are willing to pay more, may secure additional advantages if it be an advantage to live on an omnibus route or on the top of a metropolitan railway line.

Say that you elect to reside in that realm of the Israelite, Maida Vale, you can take your choice of fifty rooms, aye, and double that very often, within five minutes' walk of that magnificent thoroughfare along which the useful Vanguard shoots from five o'clock on one morning till one o'clock in the next. And for not one of these rooms need you pay more than five shillings a week, if you have an appearance of respectability.

If you have no look of respectability about you at the moment, you should straightway go and get one.

If you are unable to do so, why should you blame the decent householder who demurs to admit you into his decent house?

Now this stamp of respectability ought not to be very difficult to acquire. It is merely the guarantee you must bear on your brow, that you can be trusted with a latch-key, that you have some slight consideration for the nerves and the susceptibilities of others, that you will not carve away the framework of your windows when you are in want of kindling for your fire, and that you will not reel home in a condition of inebriety at one o'clock in the morning.

If you be a good young man or a model young woman and your appearance vouches for this, you can get a charming room, large and airy, unfurnished of course, with two fair-sized windows and a little cooking range where you may work your own wicked will on your digestion, and for this you need only pay five shillings a week.

The house where your one room is situated, will probably have a garden, a good entry, and a porch or pillars to its doorway. It will likewise have balconies to the windows beneath your own, wherewith to impress your friends when they leave a card, and the owner of the place will pay for it a rent of anything between £50 and £65 a year.

In halcyon days, your own modest contribution of £13 a year, would have paid the whole of the rates and taxes. Now, thanks to those we have placed in authority over us, the £13 a year rent for the Top Front Room with Two Windows won't pay the rates and taxes or anything like it. However, that is not in the present story.

If you have the bad taste to prefer two small dark rooms at the back of the same house, or in its roof, to the large double-windowed apartment in the front, you can obtain them at the same rent or with an extra shilling thrown in; it is merely a matter of choice.

Supposing that, though eminently desirable in your own estimation, you are not quite so immaculate in mien as the applicants described. If, for example, being a man, you have a clay pipe peeping out of your pocket, while your hat dips rakishly to one side, or if, being a woman, your fringe sweeps bountifully over your eyebrows and there is a dashing look about your blouse, you might not be acceptable as a tenant in a house of ultra-refinement. Still you will find one close at hand that suits your own modes and manners much better, with the same comforts and conveniences and at the same rent. Such things are all a matter of degree.

If the blouse and the clay pipe constitute a married couple, they would find equally good accommodation on equally modest terms in some other house hard by ; but in that case they must naturally be prepared to answer a more stringent catechism as to being in regular work and of regular habits.

Leaving the domain of picturesque portico and large balcony, of wide Terrace or Place with window-gardens and neat strips of lawn and flower-beds behind, we descend upon hundreds and hundreds of decent little streets, not the “mean” streets of modern fiction, those rank lower still, but such as include many cosy little homes to right and left. There are few of these in which rooms cannot be obtained for three or four shillings each a week, while two or even three can sometimes be had for six or eight shillings.

And in each of these smaller streets, be they mean or merely homely, are to be found decorous elderly women living alone, who will let a large airy room to two or three “respectable young working men” or working women at two-and-six a head, by whose means the landlady will contrive to live rent-free, while she provides herself with bread and butter by cooking and “doing” for her tenants for a small further consideration.

There is hardly an unmarried porter at a railway station, a postman to His Majesty, or a policeman in the force who, when his pay is still under twenty-five shillings a week, has not shared a room with some chum in some such decent household in a manner satisfactory to all concerned. When his wages rise to thirty shillings, if he does not marry, he generally stays on in the house, taking a room or rooms to himself at a rent which allows him a very liberal remainder indeed out of his pay, for either frittering away on his diversions or housing in the bank according to his predilections.

The reason there is always so much house-room going begging in the superior second-best parts of the town is characteristically English. Every man's house is his castle, and every man wants a castle. The rent of a fairly good house in a more or less central district, is never less than £50 a year; as a rule, it greatly exceeds that sum. Now those who desire these houses, include tens of thousands of worthy Londoners, men and women, who are neither of the rich nor of the poor, of the high class nor of the low, and who form the backbone of the country, but although these may desire a house of that standing, they cannot always afford it. Therefore, they take it and let certain rooms, more or less in number, according as their own private income allows.

Again, such people want a servant, but unassisted they cannot in all cases afford this expense, which grows heavier year by year. They solve the problem by giving "attendance" to such as share the house with them, the one "general," with assistance from her deft-handed mistress, being quite able to wait on two households of simple requirements, if under the same roof.

Also the number of women is great who, having perhaps husbands worthless or incompetent, naturally long for a little independent pocket-money, and when a woman is married and must remain at home to preside over the

house, something in the form of a paying guest or lodger is, as a rule, the only way of securing such pocket-money.

Let those who doubt that good rooms at five, four, or three shillings a week abound, or that a good little top-floor "flat" of three rooms with use of wash-house in basement can be had from seven to ten shillings, according to locality, take up some local paper. They will there find that the notices of Rooms to Let, furnished and unfurnished, cover many columns, while of Rooms Wanted the proportion is only two or three per cent. The said local paper, with its convenient telegraph-rates of sixpence for twelve words, and three insertions for a shilling, obviates, to a certain extent, the necessity of writing the unpleasant legend of "Apartments" across the dining-room window, and plays the same part in the social system as the house-agent on the level above.

Of course the ideal life can never be lived in rooms, one, two, or three in number. It must be self-contained in more senses than one. I merely point out that a possible existence, at a possible cost, can be lived in most parts of the town, which can be made to suffice till things better are attained, though we are still far from seeing on our horizon that Elysium which prevails across the Atlantic.

There, every successful clerk or hard-working artisan, if he be sober or thrifty, may with little difficulty become owner of the house he inhabits. The thing is worked on the instalment system. The candidate for real estate plumps down anything from ten to fifty pounds and pays a given amount per month with interest at six per cent. For a first payment of even ten or twenty pounds, with deferred payment of, let us say, two pounds a month, the fortunate American may find himself the possessor of a good house in a wide, well-paved avenue, bordered by trees and with a tram-line at hand to take him at good rate

of speed, and at small cost, to his work and his play in the city. His house will have six or eight rooms beside a good entrance-hall and bath-room, the steps up to his door and the "trimmings" of his house front will be of marble, the painting and papering will be done to his taste, and the whole place, including the cooking range, will be heated by a furnace in the basement; thus that horror of the household, the lighting of the kitchen fire in the small hours, is a thing that does not exist.

Before concluding my subject, let me once more, at the risk of wearying the reader, most emphatically repeat that excellent rooms for single persons can be had at the rents named in most of the central parts of London, with the obvious exceptions of the sacred precincts of Belgravia and Mayfair. That two smaller and somewhat inferior rooms can always be found at the same rent or thereabouts. That a decent married couple can always find the same accommodation at the same price in houses a little more unassuming, if, of course, unencumbered by a family.

That a respectable old couple with a son or daughter residing with them, or a party of three or four girls, or another of three or four men clubbing together, need not pay more than half a crown a head for the same.

When once the question of children is introduced, the difficulty is of course increased. The overcrowding, which the respectable householder rightly holds in horror, at once becomes a possibility, and naturally the presence of the small fry, does not make for that orderliness and quiet which makes the house popular among the better class of one-room tenants.

In this case, all the man with a young family need do, is to look out for a landlady who has also a young family, in which event, other conditions being favourable, he and his are at once made welcome.

However low you go down in the social scale, you can still find housing in London equal to your demand, for

each stately thoroughfare, each dainty terrace, with its wealth of blossom falling from the window-sills, has its own particular little slum. Regent Street has been called the finest thoroughfare in Europe, yet if you walk through it with your back to Piccadilly, you may, without leaving its pavement, peer into a number of very tolerable slums to the right hand side.

"Will this short cut take me to Upper Oxford Street?" asked a lady of a policeman one day, as she looked doubtfully into one of these turnings.

"Yes, ma'am, but I don't say as you'll ever get there!" said the man in blue encouragingly.

Working-men's flats were mainly constructed with the idea of solving the family problem, but these have not altogether answered the purpose for which they were intended. The average working-man hates climbing stairs, the average working-man's wife hates cleaning stairs, and the conveniences of the small and cosy flatlets do not appeal to them. They frequently refuse adherence to the few simple rules drawn up for the common good, consequently, in many cases, flats such as those which were erected for the hand-worker at Sloane Square Station, have changed their name from Holbein Buildings to Holbein Mansions, and are now mainly tenanted by clerks, clergymen, artists, typists, doctors, and that vast army of educated women, paid and unpaid, who now marshal the forces of the philanthropic and municipal associations. In like manner, the fine buildings of Park Row erected as working-men's homes in the immediate vicinity of Park Lane some twenty years ago, are now chiefly tenanted by the butlers, coachmen and valets of the owners of the great houses near.

Of course the old adage of like will to like, still remains true, and always will remain true.

As a rule, slummy people prefer slums. That is a fact which philanthropist and County Councillor so often ignore.

Take nine out of ten of the denizens of squalid court and noisome alley from their unsavoury surroundings to-day and set them in the spacious premises of the County Council at Millbank or in Boundary Street, Bethnal Green, and they will grumble and ask to be directed to some "homelike" court or alley such as they lately left. This, partly because they honestly like grime, and riot, and general disorder, partly because they are willing to put up with riot and disorder on the part of others, provided they may indulge in the same themselves.

A priest in Stepney once remarked to me :

"A great difficulty with us, is that we so rarely have anyone in our parish who serves as an example to the rest. The moment we have made them decent members of society, they go out to the pleasant suburb of East Ham or similar places, where the air and the conditions of life are alike more pure. They come back to us frequently, I am thankful to say, on our Sundays and High Days, but they never again make their home among us."

Like, then, must to like, all the world over.

The mother who trails half-a-dozen unkempt, squabbling, squalling children behind her, the drink-sodden crone, the surly, ill-conditioned street singer, the slatternly woman with bursting elbows and dragged tail, the slouching youth, evil-featured and evil-scented, what should they do in a decent house : in a decent house where decent people, who poor though they may be, lead lives of sweetness and light? The landlord who resides on his own premises would have none of them, even if they did not bear written clearly across their brows, the record of rent always in arrears, of hand and voice raised in unseemly guise, of banging doors and tramping feet on the staircase when their housemates wish to sleep, and the possibility of things far worse.

For these, there is indeed no house-room in respectable homes. Is there room for them anywhere?

Of course the County Council, which thinks in millions,

builds accordingly. As its officials remark royally: "Overcrowding is not allowed. Our standard is two persons per room. Children over five count as adults. You can have two rooms at Holmwood Buildings for nine-and-six a week or three rooms in Bethnal Green at ten-and-six and twelve-and-six."

"But I thought Bethnal Green was such a crowded part, and so very poor!" exclaimed a lady inquirer.

"It is, madam," said the County Council official, "but we are trying to raise the standard. Hundreds are turned out of the Council dwellings every year, either because they exceed the number of two persons per room, because they are irregular in their payments, or because we demand more orderliness of behaviour than suits the tenant. The County Council is firmly resolved that all its buildings shall be a credit to themselves and an example to others, and that all who occupy those buildings shall be the same."

"But where do the poor creatures go when you turn them out?" asked the visitor.

"Well, they first try to find new homes as near as possible to the old ones, and as we follow them, they go further east or across the river, but since we make the destruction of the slums our first object, we hope to catch them all up in time. Still, the County Council does very well with its houses as a rule. Some of them are occupied almost entirely by the better class of working Jews, and you can't get a better tenant than a respectable Jew."

"Three millions!" exclaimed the visitor to herself. "Three millions, spending and spent, of British Rate-payers' money, and we look round on our work with satisfaction and remark: 'We have to turn out a great many as our rents are beyond their means, their earnings being small, either on account of irregularity of employment or because the work, though regular, is badly paid. However, we don't mind that, because we make up with

the better class of Jews.' Three millions ! Three millions ! and for the better class of Jews ! The British Ratepayer bowed down to the dust by the cruel and scandalous burden laid upon his shoulders, bowed down in many heartrending instances, to the point where suicide itself crosses the hearthstone, and the last straw added to that burden in order that more luxurious quarters may be provided for the better class of Jews."

XVII

"TINNED SALMON AND SARDINES GALORE"

BABY WEST is early taught, with examples as well as precepts, the meaning of such irritating adages as "Waste not, want not," "He who spoils bread, lacks bread," and so on. He must finish off one plate before he asks for another. He must not throw away the milk because his table has also been provided with cream.

Young East, in those seasons when plenty reigns, takes care that that plenty is enjoyed. No tedious thought of the future for him. It is to the poorest quarters you must turn, if you wish to see the largest fragments of white bread thrown into the gutters, the crust of yesterday's loaf cast aside that you may fix your teeth in the fresh-cut slice of to-day's.

A woman, a certain Mrs. West, once declared she would pick up enough in the thoroughfares of the East End in four-and-twenty hours, to keep a human being fed and warmed for four-and-twenty hours.

She won her wager.

She reported that she found enough bread to keep a man going for a week. Greens were there in plenty, for the coster always throws one-half the cabbage away. Meat and bones with a couple of stray carrots, wherewith she concocted a savoury stew and nourishing soup, were also to the fore. A dish of rhubarb to stay the hunger of

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half-a-dozen persons was provided by the tops and bottoms of the stalks from a couple of coster-barrows.

She sought for cigarette ends to furnish half-a-dozen "Abdullahs," but most of these were straightway picked up by others as they fell, so her allowance of tobacco was not so generous as in other directions.

As for firing, she had that galore. She declared the wood alone would have kept her warm during a Christmas week. Then there were a dozen lumps of coal of sizes various, a handful of coke, and a few boots which, as the wise are aware, give out more heat than anything, and will sooner than anything coax dead embers to red heat and keep them there.

She did not herself partake of the sumptuous meal she had prepared. Her argument was that as collector and cook her part was done, but those before whom she set it, they unknowing whence it came, declared they left her table in the fulness of content. Asked whence she had her idea, Mrs. West confessed it to be from the Sisters of Charity in some foreign city she had visited. They once showed her a day's gathering, a basket of horrors.

"Now," quoth the Sisters, "having looked on that picture, look you on this," and, turning to the stove, the visitor saw toothsome dishes, stews and ragôuts, sweets and entrées, fit for a Sassoon, yet the day before, these had come in in as unsavoury a form as the pile now hidden away under yonder cloth.

"It is the hand of God," said the Sisters simply. "We, by His aid, have turned what you saw to what you see. They give it us at the hotels and the houses of the great in return for our blessing, and we prepare it for those of His children who are in need."

The white bread the Sisters handled as a thing well-nigh sacred, reserving it for the old and ailing. They could not believe that with us black bread is unknown.

In a well-to-do German house of the middle class, where

clear-cut crystal is seen on the table and handsome old plate on the sideboard, supreme respect is likewise shown to the white loaf. Small squares will be cut from it and distributed round the table. The meal over, the bread will be respectfully enveloped in a white cloth and stored away that it may be again served as a treat on subsequent occasions.

Butcher's meat, too, is costly stuff in this country, yet according to the world's food statistics, the annual consumption of flesh food here is more than double the amount to each inhabitant of that which it is in Russia, a country of far colder average climate than our own, while the sturdy Piedmontese peasant contents himself with one-fourth of what is consumed in England.

It may be said that the poor do not get their fair proportion, since the family joint appears once only in the week, and the chop and steak at eightpence a pound, is not seen as often as might be.

The man at the little grocer's shop which stands at every corner, is, however, all day long cheerily engaged in handing out tins of salmon and lobster, not to speak of the much-quoted sardine. These are dainties which the thrifty housewife of the middle class, looks on as too expensive for common use. Yet, except in times of special dearth, East always seems able to produce the shilling which will procure them, and much prefers such viands to the fresh meat, which takes so much time and trouble to prepare.

And, as said a kindly butcher of philanthropic turn, "They won't eat my fat and they won't buy my bones for soup, if it's ever so. I tells 'em and I advises 'em, but it ain't no good, they all says 'No bones for we! That's for the furriners!' Then I sells all my good bones to the Germans for their soup, and all my good fat to the Italians to cook their cheese and their macaroni and their vegetables, which they never serves without a bit of tasty

dripping, and they lives on just half what our own people does and looks better too, when we've civilised them a bit.

"You look at that grocer on the other side of the street, sir," and he jerked his thumb with infinite contempt in the direction of a neat little window opposite. "He fills his window fresh three or four times every week with all those tins of his, and he gets all the shillings as oughter come to me. I'd paint the children's cheeks for 'em red enough if I'd the makin' of the laws, and I'd fill out their little sticks of legs and arms. The grocer has had his try at it for long enough, and he hasn't done it 'nor he won't neither.

"Then all you clever gentlemen all over the country puts your heads together and says we're just puzzled to death about this physical degeneration business ! Why don't you all come and talk to me, a man as knows what half your anæmia and your physical degeneration is caused by. Englishmen is meant to live on beef, not on sardines, and if they spends all their money on tins, why it's common sense as they can't buy beef, so in course they all dies of anæmia, and serves 'em jolly well right, says I."

Mr. Bullock was quite right. Once send the East End grocer into the Bankruptcy Court by refusing to allow him to sell those tin goods with their maximum of attraction and their minimum of sustenance, and the butcher's bill of the nation will be doubled as it ought to be. What did Wellington tell the Government at home when they found fault with him for looting the cattle of his allies, and, by inference, ordered him to feed his troops on oranges ?

XVIII

"OUR NED, HE WILL HAVE HIS WAY"

BABY EAST, son of a young gamekeeper, was invited, when he was in his fourth year, to spend a whole day up at the castle with little Lord West, who was of his own age.

He was washed and adorned for the sacrifice, but as Mother East tied the strings of his pinny she sighed and said, "I'm afraid it's a mistake; things will look very poor to him when he gets back to his home again."

"Don't you fret," said Father East, "the little chap'll see he's much better off where he is," and he looked out down the open glades where his other children were at play, where freedom and sunshine reigned supreme.

Mother East conducted her child to the patrician nurseries, then, with that duplicity which it is not considered wrong to use towards the immature, she glided behind the screen and stole away downstairs.

Baby East did not notice her absence nor bewail it when he did. He sat stiff and stolid on the rug which he shared with his little Lordship, considering the situation and disdaining to glance at the toys offered for his approval by his courteous young host and the nurses.

His survey concluded, he rose and, thrusting aside the blandishing hands of those around him, made his way to the door. A vigorous kick having failed to open it, he set up a strident yell.

Accustomed was he to easy exit, and of confinement he disapproved. The biscuits and chocolate offered as solace for imprisonment were accepted, but, once devoured, the assault on the door was renewed.

To pacify him, it was opened at last, though the surprised disapproval of the minute earl at the concession, was manifested by a pucker on his baby brow.

The young plebeian then made his way towards the staircase. He had "had enough," to use the familiar phrase, and was going home. But across the first step, was a gateway bolted and barred. Furiously did young East shake and thrust at it, clamorously and indignantly did he shriek and scream.

All efforts to soothe and to please him having failed, Mother East was sent for that she might take her rebel home.

"Did he want his Mammy, did he?" she said, cuddling him close when she got him to her own fireside. "Was that why my boy cried so to come away?"

"No—o—o," bawled Baby East, "It was torse dey sut me up tight in a box ike de ferrets, and de uzzer pore ickle Baby d'ave dot him too, and sree women to take care he doesn't get away. He's in pizzen, he is. Boohoo, boohoo!"

"He's quite right, is the little chap," said the game-keeper. "I'm a lot better off than the Markis, but it took me half my life to find it out. Little chap, he's cleverer than me, he found out in five minutes he was better off than the young lord, he did. The Markis, he's shut up at this minute with the steward and the bailiff and some farmers to follow, as he is 'most every morning in the week, be the sun shining and the birds plentiful as they may."

With that, big burly Gamekeeper East shouted out a hint to his wife that she was to have something toothsome ready for him on his return, and that she might go

on keeping it hot, as he didn't know what time he'd be back. Then he took his gun in one hand and his little son in the other, and strolled away in his comfortable velveteen corduroys, well-warmed, well-fed, well-pleased, with a wife and work that suited him, with a sway over the woodlands far greater than that of his lord, the Marquis, and without need to envy any man on the face of the earth.

Again, as to the choice of friends: It is the right of man, embryo or otherwise, to select his chums where he will.

Why, then, should Baby West be exempt? The ally for whom his soul chiefly pines, is the crossing-sweeper at the corner.

The life of that crossing-sweeper is life indeed. Had not Baby West seen him with trousers rolled up to his knees, revelling in the mud which lay inches deep about his insteps.

Now Baby West was badly chidden of late, when he even ventured to insert his tiny tan shoe in the smallest depression of the asphalt where water lay.

Why, why this freedom for the crossing-sweeper and oppression dark and vile for the minute son of Midas? Oh, to wallow in that mud and to handle that ecstatic broom! The crossing-sweeper had offered it him with a wink and a leer one day, when Baby West hung back and progressed crab-like by his cheated nurse's side, while eyes and heart went out to that blissful son of mud.

Then Baby forgot to listen to the twice-told tale of Green Book Fairies and their ilk, while he plotted how he might some day gain his ends by slipping through the hall door when it hung on the chain. The thing could be done he knew, for he had achieved it once, and though he was caught on the step by the butler, that was at least a variety from being seized by nurse's too familiar grasp.

Next, the dream went on, he would run down the gutter, the dismal pavement should be eschewed on that delirious day, and he would join his friend and claim the broom.

Then hurrah for the splashing of the mire on the passing carriage! Hurrah for the mad leaping under the horses' hoofs! Hurrah for the big brown broom that flies wildly here and there in its master's grasp! Hurrah for the soft slippery mud plastered on hand and knee, and sock and shoe, and cap and coat! Hurrah for—— but here there is a snatch and a slap, for Baby, travelling in his reverie from the pathway, had strayed among the roses of the Kensington flower-garden, and nurse had brought him to the dull things of earth again.

The fellowship of the chimney-sweep is coveted next after that of the crossing-sweeper. What a lovely, lovely face he has, that sweep! Dusky grey with tawny eyes, nicer even than a Christy minstrel. And if he likes, he may jump right into his bag of soot, that nice soft stuff that you can fill your pockets and your cap with and put down your back and up your sleeves and all over you, as the sweep does. Then the sweep may run his fingers through those whirling bristles that he swings up and down, and knocks against the railing of the Square, brandishing it aloft as he darts up from the area to join his master in that dear little black cart waiting in the street.

That boy's name is Sam Sweep. How delightful to be called Sam Sweep. Little West's name is a long ugly common sort of thing that takes half-an-hour to say. It begins with Reginald Marmaduke, and he knows dozens of boys called either Reginald or Marmaduke. How much nicer to be called Sam Sweep. He wonders if Papa would let him change his name if he asked him, promising to be very good. With that Baby's thoughts fly off at a tangent while he calculates how good it would be necessary to be if this favour were granted.

Then there is Pete, the plumber's boy, who, without let or hindrance, may stir the pot of boiling lead on the fire and bring a lot of little silver bubbles spitting and squirting up to the top. One day Pete was allowed to help the man to make a big hole in the nursery floor, and no one said anything to him. Now little West was smacked and put into the corner for five minutes, when he only broke a hole in the window with the poker to let the birds in.

Pete, the plumber, may light the gas too, when he likes, and turn it off and on in a way that is most tantalising to Baby, sitting spell-bound on the nursery-rug. Baby saw him light it three or four times to the minute once, striking matches for the purpose in reckless profusion. And nurse never said a word. That is what puzzles little West so badly.

Why the other day when Baby clambered up on the table and turned on the gas, making such a nice funny smell over the room, nurse caught him and, oh dear, how hard she smacked him before putting him in the corner to repent.

The butcher's boy is another whose friendship is coveted by Baby West. That hero dashes up without a hat, driving his gee for all it is worth, with a dog snapping and barking in and out the wheels and away and out of sight into the wilds before Baby can count twice, as he looks out of the nursery window.

Next in attraction is the page boy, all over fascinating buttons, the boy who may go into the kitchen whenever he pleases, who sits in the pantry playing with the white-ning and the brick-dust for an hour at a time, and who carries the dishes out from dinner with opportunity for putting his finger into them all in that dark corner beyond the baize door.

What an Elysium would life be, if its joys and its freedom, and, above all, its glorious irresponsibility were shared with heroes such as these.

Now young East chooses his friends where fancy wills, and if he be gainsaid, which is little likely, what matter? His mother, perchance, throws him a gibe if she finds him at marbles with Dick of Commercial Slum when his position warranted him seeking the companionship of Dick of Commercial Court. She does not, however, waste her breath on serious expostulation, although Dick of the Slum is suspected of occasional thieving and more than suspected of too frequent use of the Red Word, while Dick of the Court was captain of the sea-side camp last season and is the youngest of his year to attain the Fifth Standard.

"Our Ned, he will have his way," says Mother East with an easy sense of her responsibilities, when remonstrance is made, "so my way is to let him a-be!"

The beginning and the end of East End philosophy. Let each have his way, from babe in arms to beard of grey

XIX

“ANGELS, DEMONS, AND INTERMEDIATES”

It is very generally asserted and believed that the Easts are good and generous to the Easts in a supreme degree, that their duty to their neighbour when he stands above them in the social scale may be open to criticism, not so when he is on their own level.

Let a moment's consideration be given to the subject, and while this is done let comparison be set aside. It is no argument to shout out remarks on glass houses. Let the statement be discussed at the one meeting, the comparison made at the other.

In order to make an easy start, let the police-court subjects be forgotten.

Let us suppose the non-existence of those grim vices from which goodness and generosity to each other are scarcely to be inferred, namely, wife-beating, wife-desertion, child torture, infant-insurance, drunken onslaughts, the direct and intentional leading of the young into paths of depravity, murder from motives of petty theft, of jealousy, for the sake of mere brutality and ruffianism, or from no palpable motive whatever.

These common meeting-grounds being set beyond the pale, it will be found that the opportunities for close intercourse, or indeed for any intercourse whatever, between the average child and parent, brother and sister, husband

and wife, the younger generation and its grandsire, the existing conditions of East End life being what they are, are so slight that they play a most unimportant part in the social scheme.

Even the infant in arms, is deliberately set at arm's length by the mother in many cases. A few years ago, great efforts were made to establish day nurseries on the principle of the *crèche* so universal on the Continent, at different points of every parish in the East End.

The objections which have prevented the increase of these are two-fold. First, the excessive cost, as the babe which had to content itself with a bare pennyworth of milk at home, remonstrated volubly if it were limited to three times that amount when away. The second objection is that all mothers who could muster threepence or fourpence, besieged the nursery with their children, even though they were not engaged in work outside the walls of their home.

Thus the supporters of the *crèches* found that they were assailing the last stronghold of domesticity with a vigour which, on their own part, was equally unexpected and undesired.

As to the frailty of the ties of the home life in other directions, let those of the boy be first considered, he being a good deal to the fore at present.

The British boy is one of the pleasantest productions of the day. Bright, jolly, cheery, resourceful, self-dependent, self-sufficing, appreciative of what is done for him, and frequently manly in bearing and comely in appearance.

He has his faults, otherwise he would not be father to the man. In spite of these, he has captivated all who have to do with him, from that glorious national hero, Lord Charles Beresford, on the Council of the Boys' Empire League, to that king of men, the Bishop of London, who gives him addresses all to himself from the pulpit of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Some day the British boy will learn to manage his strikes, his trade unions, and his social agitators in different guise from that in which his father does now. Then he will retain his present attributes when he has ceased to be a British boy and become a British man.

But that for future consideration.

Being such as described, any mother in the East might be proud of her son.

Oddly enough, few mothers in the East ever seem to want to have anything to do with that son.

The average mother allows the boy to come in at meal times, but he must not stop in too long.

She sanctions his entry at sleeping-time, but he must not come in too early. In between, he must be elsewhere. How or where, matters nothing to her, all she asks is that he should be beyond her range of vision.

If the boy were at home and the mother were not at home he would get into mischief, therefore he must not enter the common residence in her absence.

If the mother be at home and the boy wish to be there too, things clash at once. To prevent the clash, the mother again decrees that he must go.

As for the intercourse between the average East End lad and his father, it is so slight that it hardly calls for mention. The days of the whack and bang end early, earlier now than before the days of the "Preventions," and when they are passed, what would in the West be termed a mere bowing acquaintance, is usually established in their place.

It was for these reasons, that Working-boys' Evening Clubs had such an instant and signal success in the East End.

As a curate at work there said: "The boys, poor little chaps, had literally nowhere to go to when their work hours were over, till we gave them their clubs. They couldn't all be got to attend night-schools. Their mothers wouldn't have them at home, and the police had always

some fault to find when they were about the streets. Now they have their Clubs, and they are as happy there as the evening is long."

Clean hands, clean collar, and a subscription of a halfpenny a week are the terms of membership.

In some parishes they omit the halfpenny, but most prefer to work on the old sound principle that what you pay for, you value most.

The Clean Collar has a marvellously civilising effect

The respect a boy has for that strip of linen is amazing. He will give up street fighting and now and again go through the ceremony of washing his hands, he will deny himself the pleasure of throwing mud, he will occasionally leave a window unbroken, he will refrain from joining in the onslaught upon the Bobby when trouble arises, all that his Collar may remain immaculate.

In time he comes to living up to it. He will try to get on, to rise in the world, to gain the good word of his fellows, all this to do honour to his Collar when once he has come under its sway.

There is an instance quoted, though I admit not on unimpeachable authority, that one East End lad even gave up the baleful cigarette for the sake of his Collar.

At one Club within my ken, the Collars are kept in boxes in the entrance. The member takes his Collar from the receptacle at one end of the passage, marches proudly forward with the white band round his neck, then deposits it within a second receptacle presided over by an attendant at the other. This because the badge would not be safe for more than a moment in his keeping, and were it torn or sullied, its owner's membership might be cancelled, a condition of things equally undesired by himself and his superiors.

The Boys' Clubs of the parish in question, are known officially as Numbers One, Two, and Three, but are privately styled those of the Angels, the Demons, and the intermediates.

Many workers in the East End have a strong sense of humour, though the first lesson they learn on crossing the bar, is that, for prudential reasons, that humour must be absolutely suppressed. The East End dislikes all humour except its own, and is inordinately suspicious of the slightest hint of its presence.

The Demons' Club, that where the Collars are kept in the corridor, is, for obvious reasons, merely an open space with gas-jets fixed near the ceiling, and two or three benches nailed to the wall. The stands for books are also nailed to the wall, and all books are nailed and corded to the stands. Demons don't read much, but, on the chance they should be so minded, a few books at times are placed at their disposal.

There are also a dozen squares of wood marked out as draughtboards. These are most popular among the Demons, ranking next, as a civilising influence, to the Clean Collar. They teach the Demons to sit still, to keep quiet, and to concentrate their attention, things which few among them ever did in their lives before.

The object of the presiding genius of the place, is to bring couples of Demons to that degree of civilisation which will ensure their admittance into the Intermediate Club.

Demons are invariably transferred in couples, for their rise and fall in virtue, is likewise achieved in couples. If they cannot be paired, it is of little use to move them at all, and to thrust a boy who has once been an Intermediate back among his former brother Demons, is a step of which the consequences are usually disastrous.

The connection between the daughter of the house and her parents is naturally less slight than that of the son. Yet slight still it is. The hours of labour are of necessity, the hours of leisure are from preference, spent apart.

It is rare indeed that one sees, as in so many Continental

towns, a various-aged family group turning their backs to their houses on a holiday morning, picnic basket in hand, as they go for a day in the country or to some public park. With us it is the children of tender age only, that accompany the mother when she wends her way thither.

On putting a question, it will nearly always be found that the mature maid of eight, has a plan on a Bank Holiday or a Sunday afternoon for her own diversion, either arranged for her by herself or by the ecclesiastical authorities, who, to their credit be it said, are indefatigable in devising means for the amusement as well as the instruction of those under their care.

Lightly-knit as they are, the home-ties are easily broken by the daughter of the house, whose ambition, from the time she leaves school at the age of thirteen or fourteen, is to have a separate establishment.

For this she has already arranged to chum up with a girl friend of her own, and the moment they have the wherewithal, two or three miniature householders will form such a home together. From that date, they are practically independent of their parents for life.

If funds are limited, four or even six will unite to maintain a residence in common, but the first requisite of existence seems to be that the home should not be under the parents' roof.

The devotion of each of these girls to her own particular chum, is often great, and seems to almost entirely occupy the place of that usually reserved for domestic affection in other sections of the community.

The family meal-time, the usual rallying point of the household in all quarters of the town, has now practically ceased to exist in the East End, and except at that weekly festival, the Sunday dinner, which is far too important a function for any to miss, the members in many cases rarely meet from morning to night.

The father, either from obligation or inclination, seldom

takes his midday meal under his own roof, the cheap and varied dishes at the "pull-up" being more to his taste, while the mother much prefers to distribute pence to the extent of a shilling or two among her half-dozen children, to spending the same amount on a satisfying meal at home.

The twopenny pie, the penny ice-cream, the stodgy bun, the bottle of pop, are sold in their thousands each day at noon to the poor children, whose pallid faces and puny frames assert plainly on what unsubstantial fare they are built up. The writers on Physical Degeneration are not acquainted with this fact. When they are, they will write their articles over again.

Breakfast in the East End is a scratch repast, some take it sitting, some standing, some, poor things, not at all; of these I write not now.

Those who do not go early to work, almost invariably eat their first meal in bed. The mother, if she be a home-worker, naturally likes to partake of her breakfast in peace after she has seen her household off on their various occupations.

The children, from preference, snatch and scoop from the cupboard what they can, and nibble away at it in the gutter on the way to school. A sit-down meal is so tedious, moreover, everyone can see how much you grab for yourself, which is unsatisfactory, and the weak and ailing must share the tit-bits with the strong and sturdy, a thing manifestly absurd.

The bread-winner himself, unless in isolated instances, carries away his breakfast in a handkerchief when he goes to his early-morning work, and eats it at some place handy for a mug or two of beer. His tea he takes at home, but since, when he is in funds, this is eked out by eggs and bacon or sausages, and of these there not being enough to go round, he is usually allowed to feast alone.

It is a great and wonderful problem that the eight hours'

working man should be allowed to appropriate all that is worth eating in the house in order that he may remain up to his labour, while his eighteen hours' working wife must, until Sunday comes round, subsist mainly on crusts and tea.

You don't believe me ! *Bien* ; I am a person of good breeding so I won't argue. All I say is, go and see. And don't judge by the exception, but by the rule.

XX

"GO UN WORK LIKE ME!"

A CERTAIN old friend of my own would be an excellent member of any Commission for allotting pensions to the Aged. She is a charwoman by profession. She has only one eye. She is sixty-seven years of age. Her parents died in her infancy. Her husband passed away thirty years ago. Her children disappeared some time in the dark ages. Yet she is absolutely self-supporting, and I am not sure but that she would disdain a pension if it were offered her, as savouring of the hated House or despised parish relief. She tells me that the old women in the neighbouring Almshouses constantly come to her begging for pennies. She reports that her replies run thus :

"Yer fat Thing, yer fat Thing. Why d'yer come to Me? Go un work! Go un work! Look at me. *I* work, un I'm older nor you, and not so strong nor so fat by a long way. Yort to be ashamed of yourself t'ave let the Almsers get 'old of yer at yer age. They shan't 'ave *me*, not for a good ten years yet, see if they do. Yer fat Thing. Go un work like me!"

With regard to those stricken in years, to continue the subject of the intercommunication of East and East in family life or as private individuals, respect and venera-

tion for age in itself, are lamentably rare on the social levels now in question. The practice of putting the parents into the poor-house the moment their earning powers come to an end, is also terribly on the increase.

In the agricultural district, in the isolated hamlet, in the sequestered fishing-village, away on the lonely hills, on the great bleak moor and uncultured fen, where hands, even shaking with palsy or knotted and gnarled with rheumatism, are of value infinite, dear old Granny is often the most important member of the establishment. To her falls the unending occupation of darning the family stockings; she also undertakes the care of the children, together with much of the cooking and general work of the house, in order to leave the owners free for more important duties.

All this is as it should be. Wisely and gloriously and radiantly as it should be.

In London, where the streets take care of the children, where the one room which forms the home, takes care of itself, and where, except on Sundays, the cooking is done at the cook-shop, if not in the lobster-factories of Newfoundland or the sardine industries of the Mediterranean, and the sock and the stocking, because they can be had for almost nothing, remain undarned from start to finish, the need for poor Granny has almost disappeared, while that chivalrous homage, that loyal reverence for those who have fought the good fight of life for nigh their allotted term of threescore years and ten, yet still remain on the field of their long labours, seem to be non-existent.

One wonders that the present-day ministers of religion, who leave so few fields of duty untrodden, do not now and again remind their listeners from the pulpit that the old Command as to honouring one's father and mother is the one, and the only one, to which is offered a special promise of reward, a mundane reward, too. The obligation for

this injunction is so obvious that one feels one would find a like behest inscribed on the runes of the Norseman and in the hieroglyphs on the house-pillars of the Maori's hut, yet in modern life, reference to it is rarely made excepting to the youngest children in the classes of their Sunday school.

And even as the knitting-pins and darning-needle justify Granny's presence in the house of son or daughter, married beyond the confines of great cities, so does her aged consort in like manner play the part of "Kitchen Colonel," as the Americans aptly put it. The old grandfather, remembering, not forgetting, his own manhood, rocks the little grandson to sleep, and fills the kettle in order that the mistress of the house may eke out the scanty income of the family by a day at the washtub.

No adult male is ever seen about a fishing-village, for example, unless in the off-hours, all being either out at sea or hidden away in the whelk-house preparing feasts for the revellers of East London, and so far as the eye can judge, the place is inhabited only by babies and those described by the State as past working-age.

There is no question here of tiring out the patience of your friends by living on beyond your allotted time; the grandmother is the most useful person under the roof, and shortsighted indeed, would be the fisherman and his wife who let her go to the workhouse.

As a matter of fact, the clerk of the village church of a Norfolk fishing-village, told me there was only one person connected with the district who had sought refuge in the workhouse of the neighbouring town. She, poor soul, had outlived all her relatives, and, being infirm as well as old, no place had been found for her under the roof of a friend, as is here the custom in such a case. When I had a chat with this old dame, she mentioned that she had nothing to complain of with regard to the House, but she added, with a burst of tears, "I'm lonesome, sir, for I'm an orphan; my father an' mother is both dead, an' I'm

lonesome ! " Eighty years of age and an orphan. Poor old lady !

Medical men and ministers of religion, the two great authorities on the East End, who, because they are the great authorities, are rarely consulted when consideration is given to the Alien Invasion, Overcrowding, Physical Degeneration, Early Marriages, and the like, often remark how few who are heavily stricken in years are ever included among their parishioners.

Strangely enough, such as are to be found, are usually those who, however great their age and infirmities, can still manage to shift for themselves and maintain a distinct residence of their own.

A couple stricken in years, without children or any on whom they depend, will support themselves, none know how, till their fourscore gallant years are fulfilled, while the same couple, if under the roof of their own kith and kin, would long ere this be called a burden and thrust into this hated House.

In this our own country compares ill, for example, with that of our neighbours to the immediate South, where so soon as the son has been launched in life and the daughter's dowry assured, the parents steadfastly devote themselves to making such provision for their old age, as shall ensure them deference and consideration to the end. The old grandsire in his picturesque blue smock, the old grand-dame with head bound up in striped kerchief, are generally the most honoured as well as the most beloved members of the fireside circle.

The goodness and generosity, so often quoted, of Mr. East to his pal is a doubtful merit. The working-man will frequently give and lend with a freedom and lavishness which is a standing marvel to those who observe it.

By a grotesque perversion of sentiment, it is not so much when the "pal" is "down," laid up by sickness or

the like, as when he is merely momentarily devoid of funds through his own extravagance, that the loans and gifts are most readily forthcoming.

The "Drink" is of course always to the fore, and the bob for baccy and the crown for the "bit on" do not lag far behind, even though the donor is aware that a very considerable sum was paid over in wages to the recipient only a few days before.

Men in the East are often sufficient to themselves and to each other to a degree unimaginable to those who have not been witnesses of it, and by dint of sharing their work, their play, their club, their interests, their ideas, and their life in general, they surround themselves by an atmosphere which seems to cut them off to a terrible degree from wife and child and home.

The same man who hands his shillings and his crowns with zest to the pal who has no claim whatever on him, will grudge his wife an extra sixpence towards the house-keeping, or a shilling for his barefoot child's new shoes. He will watch the family circle feeding on crusts and tea when he has just stood drinks to an equal number of his chums at the pub at the corner, or taken one or two of them with him as his guests to the Derby, while his wife lay cold and hungry on a bed of sickness at home.

The "You may have my tools, mate," from the poor wretch condemned to the gallows or to penal servitude for life, is pathetic indeed, but it becomes tragic to infinity when it is realised that the sentence pronounced upon him, committed to starvation the wife and children, who stood second to the chum on whom he was bestowing all he had. You mark me there, on whom he was bestowing all he had!

With regard to the home-treatment of the invalid and the infirm, at times devotion and self-abnegation beautiful to behold are shown, but there is hardly a nursing sister, hardly a district visitor who will not admit, however great

their reluctance may be, that the usual attitude is well voiced in Kipling's lurid sketch of life in the East End, of which the culminating note was :

"Oh, Mary, won't you even let me lick the spoon?"

To give an example, touching too, if less so than the foregoing : a lady once had a curious experience.

She was walking down a side street in Whitechapel, when she became aware of a crew of boys rioting immediately in her rear, but as they caused her no active annoyance, she at first paid small attention to them.

Presently she noticed a little twisted lame old man, a puny wretched being, who walked persistently close to her side, not begging, nor accosting her in any way, but merely hobbling as near her elbow as he conveniently could.

Soon a stone or two began to fly, on which the poor old fellow apologetically explained his presence.

"It's them boys, ma'am. Whenever I puts my nose out a-doors, they follows me about, throwing stones an' mud an' that and a has to go out sometimes, ma'am, to get summat to eat. It's along a they stones, ma'am, as I'm keepin' so close along a you. They'll be afeard o' throwin' big stones when you're here, for fear you'd 'oller out for the bobbies."

Few of those who have been afflicted either by the judgment of God or by the hand of man, here walk safe and free. Those who have missed the straight back, the undisfigured feature, the speaking tongue, the limb that can perform its mission, are but too often objects of contumely if not of direct assault when they leave their lair and steal out into the day.

The little lame dressmaker, the hunchback tailor, the deformed cobbler, must, in but too many cases, also make their painful way out between lights when they want their "summat to eat." The loud jeering laugh, the cruel jest, which greet their appearance, the line formed across the street to bar their progress, the missiles which hurt

heart and pride, even if they do not inflict severe bodily harm, all combine to force them to spend their joyless hours, whether occupied or free, within their miserable walls.

Verily the goodness of man to man in the East is a virtue which does not always prevail.

XXI

"A STORMY MOTHERS' MEETING"

"CERTAINLY, Mr. Augustine, I will address the women at your next 'Mothers' Meeting' with the greatest pleasure in life. As you know, I am not a platform-person, no orator, but I hope I shall be able to make them listen.

"My subject? Well, I thought of advising them to send their daughters to service.

"What? They'll howl me down, and the husbands will pelt me when I leave the Mission Room! Never mind, I'll take my chance of that, and you shall go unscathed, for I'll tell them I insisted on choosing my own subject, irrespective of the wishes of the Vicar."

Mrs. West fulfilled her threat, and a week later saw her on the platform of the Mission Room in Seven Dials, where long ranges of benches well filled with Mothers were marshalled before her, while the Vicar, looking distinctly unhappy, sat in a remote corner.

"I am going to speak to you to-day on a subject you will not like," began Mrs. West, who was a somewhat prosy but eminently practical and estimable woman.

"I have been wondering often lately why you don't send your girls to service when they leave school.

"Now there are five things a good mother hopes for when she loves her daughter :

"First, that she should grow up a strong, healthy woman. Nothing is of much use without that.

"Second, that she should some day have a dear little home of her own. Her own cups and saucers, own armchair and table, and her own fireside.

"Third, that she should have nice warm clothes and food and bed.

"Fourth, that she should have a little money in the bank.

"Lastly, that she should have a good husband and children.

"If she had all these, good health, good food and clothes, a good home, money in the bank, and a good husband, we should call her a happy woman, and we all want so much to be happy, whether young or old, rich or poor, married or single; we all try for it, and sigh for it, and cry for it, though we don't often get it.

"Now if a girl goes into service, in five years' time, unless she has been unusually extravagant or unusually unlucky, she has a box of clothes, money in the bank, and generally two or three useful friends in the mistresses under whom she has lived.

"But if she has spent the five years in a factory, it is quite certain she won't have any of these good things. Again, if she has been in service, she will be strong and plump, and rosy and nice-looking, and most likely tall.

"She will sleep well all night, and will be able to do a good day's work without feeling tired.

"Think of that, my dear friends, a hard day's work without feeling tired; what visions that calls up!

"Moreover, she will most likely not be married. Don't think I don't approve of girls getting married. I approve of it with all my heart, but I want them to marry the right kind of man, and not to marry him too soon.

"Girls about here seem to think there are no men where they go to service. But there are. There's the policeman,

a very fine fellow, over six feet high. There's the postman, smart and alert, with good health and a good character. There's the porter from the railway station near, such a manly, straightforward-looking youth, and as strong and stalwart as any you might wish to see. There's the driver of the hansom, another very good fellow, honest and sober, or his employer would not trust him with horse and cab.

"There's the greengrocer, who has a natty little shop of his own, and he leaves his mother to take care of it when he goes round to pay a call on the servant while he gets his orders in the morning.

"The daughter in service has a chance of forming acquaintance with all these men and many others. By-and-bye, when the greengrocer brings her home as his wife, she will mind the shop for him, but she must save up conscientiously in preparation for that time, for the greengrocer wants a wife as thrifty as himself, and the £30 or £40 the girl of his heart has saved out of her good wages, will come in well for buying a share in a small market-garden away on the Surrey side of the Thames. This will allow him to supply his customers with far greater advantage to both them and himself, than the greengrocer round the corner. That rival greengrocer married a slattern who, not having found out how to save before marriage, certainly did not learn to do so afterwards. Now, with half-a-dozen children behind her, each one as wasteful and as untidy as herself, she is dragging her luckless husband into bankruptcy as fast as she can drag.

"You say girls don't like service, but let them try it; let them give it a fair chance for two or three years. It will do them no harm if they come home again, stout and strong, to look for a post at eighteen instead of at fifteen. . . . A little less talk behind there, if you please, my friends.

"Tell two of your girls who are friends to get a place

near together, where they can shop at the same time and look in at each other sometimes in the evening, even when it is not the regular evening out. The mistress will be delighted to allow this, if she finds she has a neat, useful little maid in the house who works hard and tries to please her.

". . . You say you think the girl will most likely get a bad place. Well, if she does, if she is always being scolded, her wages not paid punctually, and has bad food, damp bedroom, and so on, let her leave at once. You see I quite agree with you on that point. . . . Now do let me go on.

"If she's worth anything, she'll soon get a better place, and bad places such as I have described, are very rare, in fact I've never heard of one of the kind.

"If she gets a good situation let her stick to it like a limpet. . . . One moment, Vicar, I have nearly done. . . . Well, as I was saying, if she gets a good place . . . if she does well . . . her wages will increase every year. . . . Give me your attention one instant more, my friends, there will be a debate when I have finished. . . . She will receive sixteen pounds a year by the time she is twenty. . . . and nothing whatever to buy out of it but clothes. . . . A little less noise, my dear friends. . . . my turn now, yours later at the debate. . . . She will often get presents, and be able to put money in the bank. . . . No, I don't think the mistress will be a tyrant and the girl a slave . . . mistresses aren't like that; it is much more likely that the mistress will become the girl's friend . . . for life . . . give her a wedding present . . . help her when the babies come, or if the husband dies.

"One moment, you, my friend in the red shawl, you shall talk to those behind directly I have finished. Well, as we were saying, the mistress will stand by her always, and——"

But at this point the clanging of the Vicar's bell became so energetic and the expostulation of the Mothers so vociferous

ferous, that Mrs. West was constrained to allay the uproar in the mission-room by sitting down.

The curiosity and attention with which the first part of the address had been heard, had given place, as it proceeded, to the strongest opposition and dissent. These, in turn, had threatened to degenerate into a downright riot, the mothers foreseeing the possibility of some evil-disposed person bearing an account of the proceedings to the daughters, and inducing them, tempted by the vision of that big policeman and that smart postman, to desert their factories and enter service in a body.

Fortunately for Mrs. West, the attitude they assumed, when once she quitted the rostrum, was that of ignoring her absolutely, while the mothers further contented themselves with shooting resentful glances at the Vicar, and turning silent shoulders as abruptly as the courtesy of the East allowed, on his blandishments and conciliatory remarks.

One of the women, a wasted creature with a refined look on her face, took advantage of the fact that her companions were all gathered in tumultuous argument in the doorway, and stole furtively up to Mrs. West.

"You are quite right, ma'am," she said, "in all that you said, and I would give a deal if I could get my own girls into service. I was nine years in a good house myself, five as nursery-maid, four as head-nurse, and they were the only happy years in my life. I married a drayman when I had just put the last of my hundred pounds in the bank. He might have been a good husband if it hadn't been for the drink. My dear mistress warned me against him, but he was a fine handsome young fellow; the drink hadn't begun to tell on him then. He was earning two ten a week then, but my dear missis, she says, 'What's the use of that, Mary, if he has got nothing in the bank. If the two ten slips away on nothing each week now, it will do the same when you're married.'

"I said, 'Well, ma'am, two ten is two ten, and I think we'll be all right.' Well, his two ten went, and my hundred went, and he lost his regular employment through the drink and only got taken on casual, just when they was short, and we sank lower and lower till we came to Inebriety Court, Seven Dials. Now he beats me cruel, he does, just as if I was a little child. I have nine children of my own, ma'am, and it goes to my heart to see the way they is when they run about the streets, for my dear missis's children, what I had charge of all those years, every one said they was a perfect picture. There was never a pin about them, all stitched up neat and orderly.

"I'd only one comfort left in life, ma'am," she went on, after casting an anxious look at the mob in the doorway, while the tears rained down her haggard face, "only one comfort, and that was the thought of sending my girls into service as soon as they was old enough, so that they might be happy like I used to be.

"But Jim, that's my man, he won't hear of it. They're to go to the factory, he says, and bring their wages home, says he! 'Wages going to be wasted on the bank, I like that,' says he; 'what does a man have children for, if it ain't to help at home when they're old enough.' You'll excuse me crying, ma'am, but all you've said to us to-day, it brings it all back to me, it does. Oh! I do wish I'd give an ear to my dear mistress and waited till a decent man wanted to marry me; for my Jim, he beats me shameful, he does, just like a little child!"

"I know it was at me you were ringing your bell, Vicar, although you pretended it was at the women," said Mrs. West, when the hall was finally cleared, "but I believe I should have won them after all, if you'd let me manage in my own way. Your bell only excited them."

"My bell was the only thing that prevented a down-

right riot, my dear madam," said the Vicar gruffly; "you don't understand those people; you gave them one hard hit after another, and they won't stand it. You've no idea how cautious we have to be to keep them in hand at all. As for the word mistress which you used so often, it's never heard in Seven Dials; it's the red rag to the bull.

"The reference to the Savings Bank was the last straw," he went on. "They hate the very echo of the word when it applies to the daughters' earnings; they think all should go to the family till. It was very good of you to come and address my Mothers, but you've put a hard month's work before me. I shall have to get some one who will administer honey and cream at the next meeting, or my room will remain empty in future, and I shall be lucky if I can get off without promising a free day in the country, as a panacea to their wounded feelings for the work of to-day."

"But any mistress worth her salt, must try to get the girl to put a great part of her wages into the bank," demurred Mrs. West.

"Yes, but as I explained," returned the Vicar, "the average East End mother loathes the very name of the Savings Bank. She considers that every penny that goes there, is filched from the coffers at home. The girls have their own prejudices, and look at this matter from their own point of view, of course, but with the mothers it is mainly a matter of finance in the first place and loss of caste in the second. The woman whose daughters trail ragged skirts and broken shoes to a rag-and-bone shop, would feel immeasurably superior to one whose girls have good situations in South Kensington, and she lets the other know it. Then even the best of the parents are armed against us at another point, for they look on service in the West End as exile, as imprisonment and exile."

"But their earnings here are so wretchedly small," demurred the obstinate Mrs. West.

"With the home-workers and the workers by the piece, yes," replied the Vicar, "but few need be home-workers unless they choose, or are driven to it by circumstances, poor things. You hear of three shillings a dozen for making shirts and blouses and stitching uppers at a penny farthing an hour the day through, but a girl, unless she is lame, or deformed, or 'wanting,' hardly ever is a home-worker, and at the factories, all things considered, the wages are not bad. An untrained girl of seventeen in domestic service cannot hope for more than three or four shillings a week, while the same girl in a factory would get from seven to ten shillings."

"But her maintenance——"

"I don't forget that, but the mother does. She never takes into account any sum of which she has not the handling herself, and whether the wages are seven or ten shillings, the greater part of it passes through the mother's hands, till the girl breaks away from control and sets up an establishment of her own.

"Also the mistress very rightly bears in mind that her little maid is sharing all the comforts of a home, well warmed, well ventilated and furnished and maintained at a cost of some hundreds or some thousands a year, as the case may be. Now the mother considers all this as besides the mark.

"'My girl would get all that here,' she says, pointing to the grimy fireless room where her own progeny and probably that of another person, all lie huddled together at night; they don't trouble it much in the day. Then there are the half-time wages, those play a vital part in the social system here, and half-time certificates are only available so long as the child is employed under the Factories and Workshops Acts, or in some manner approved by the School-attendance Committee. The half-time wages go exclusively to the mother, who merely allows her child a few pence out of them as pocket-money."

"I throw up the game!" said Mrs. West, silenced but unconvinced.

"Yes, my dear lady," said the Vicar blandly, "but would it not have been as well if you had done so before you compelled me to read the Riot-act at the Mothers' Meeting in my own Mission Room?"

XXII

“ALL LITTLE MAIDS FROM SCHOOL.” A PRACTICAL SOLUTION OF A GREAT PROBLEM

THE services of the little Miss East who lives in the West End are in much request for domestic purposes.

If she be too rough or too young for the shops, she is willing to consider offers for such service, since there are no factories handy in these parts.

As this is a case of wanting and being wanted, one would have thought that the results would have been eminently satisfactory for Miss East.

A good home, good food, wages which would allow her to send a little money home and yet to maintain a small balance at her bank, an apprenticeship without a premium and an assured position for life, all would be made safe for her.

Miss East, however, strongly objects to going to those places where she's “got to 'elp the Missis !” and unhappily her friends in those most excellent institutions for befriending Young Servants, which now abound all over the town, support her in this.

That which she prefers, is a place in some smart house as Tweeny Maid.

Now to obtain one of these places, unless she be an exception to the rule, is the worst thing that can happen to Miss East.

If she be an exception, she notices carefully what is going on around her, makes herself indispensable, and rises steadily by always making an attempt at the operations which are just a little beyond her powers, till she conquers those heights in succession. Finally she comes to a decision as to whether she is more adapted for kitchen or for house work.

In two or three years' time, she applies for a place as full-blown cook or housemaid in a small way, and from that moment, unless she has married the butler or the coachman, it depends on herself whether she will ever be in want of a luxurious home and a high salary for half a century to come. However exceptions are rare, so need not be dealt with further.

In ordinary cases, the Tweeny Maid in a large house has to play ball to two rackets; she spends the greater part of her life on the staircase, she is always blamed for being on the staircase, and while continually accused of doing nothing, she, in fact, works harder than any one else in the house.

For this reason, mistresses of ordinary humanity and of any power of observation, as a rule steadfastly refuse to include any Tweeny Maid in their household.

By a curious anomaly, although the Tweeny Maid works so hard in the kitchen, she rarely learns anything of cooking.

As a certain Tweeny Maid's mother put it, hitting the mark, as her class usually does, though by an indirect route.

"She peels the pitaties all day long and she washes the greenses all day long, and she wipes up the disheses all day long, and she cleans the kitchen-floorses all day long, and when she's done that, she begins it all over again.

"So at last I calls on a visit to that 'ere cook an' I says, says I :

" 'Look 'ere, Cook ! my girl's not a-goin' to stop on 'ere

and do all your work for you, as you is credit for, unless you learns her to be a cook like yerself.'

"Then the cook she jus' stops my mouth with a cup-a-tea. Very good tea it was, I'm not a-sayin' nothin' agen the tea nor the muffin that went with it, an' when I drunk the tea: 'Mrs. Clarke,' that's me, says Cook, she says, 'I'm now a-goin' to get dinner ready for the fambly, so by your leave I'll wish you a good day.'

"Then as I was comin' away I 'eard her shout out: 'Now, Millie, you peel them pitaties and wash them greenses and scrub the floorses, then you'll be ready to clean the disheses when they comes out from the fambly's dinner.'

"So that's all the good, except the tea and muffin, which it was only one 'arf muffin, I got for sayin' my girl must be taught how to cook.'

"You were quite right, Mrs. East," said the visitor to whom the grievance was retailed, "and when she leaves that big house, I should let her go to a small one where she would learn how to do everything, and work directly under a mistress who would take an interest in her, and teach her how to do things properly."

"Well, ma'am," said the disappointing mother, "she did go to a small 'ouse before the big un, and I took her away at once. They give the girl tin-beef for dinner twice a week, and when I said, 'What's tin-beef?' they egscused theirselves by sayin' it was just what they had theirselves, with a suet-puddin' to follow. I said I 'ates such mean ways, my girl would get as good a dinner as that at 'ome any day, and without doing no work at all; so 'ome she goes. She didn't take to the ways of that house herself, neither."

"What was the matter with its ways?"

"Well, ma'am, the Missis, she'd say, 'Come an' 'elp me to clean that room,' says she.

"'The room's quite clean as it is. It doesn't want no

cleanin',' says my girl, as 'as allus got a tongue in 'er 'ed, and I'm thankful for it.

"Then the Missis didn't use to say nothin', but she pulled all the furniture out of the room in the most aggeravatin' way, and sets Millie to't. And she'd never let the girl do her own way neither. She'd say all day long: 'Learn my way. Do my way.' Till my Millie she was fair sick of it, and was glad enough to be took away. The only thing we minded was that she was five shillings in debt to the Girls' Friendly as 'ad got 'er the place, and 'ad advanced 'er the money for stockens and aprons, to be paid back in bits out of her wages. You'd never believe how they went on at it, and took their revenge by thretting never to get the girl another place.

"And right mean that Missis was, too, as all Missises is mean when they look after things theirselves. It was, 'Millie, throw up the ashes now we doned cookin' this dinner, to save the coal'; an' 'Millie, turn down the light in the kitchen when you're in the scullery, to save the gas'; an' 'Millie, darn your stockens when there's 'oles in 'em, don't wait till the 'oles get all over and then throw 'em away'; an' 'Millie, mend that slit in your apron now before it gets no bigger'; an' 'Millie, don't peel the apples and the pitaties so thick, it's waste, and takes away all the best part, too'; an' 'Millie, don't throw away the fat, which it does to cook fish with; it's waste.'

"Millie's like 'er mother, she 'ates such mean, savin' ways," concluded Mrs. East. "As the girl herself says, she thanks her stars there's no savin' and no mindin' of waste in the 'ouse where she is now."

There are tens of thousands of little homes in the country where the owners, curates, clerks, small shopkeepers, humble lodging-house keepers, women of limited means with a profession, women of limited means without a profession, who are not well enough off to keep a regular servant, but who could just manage to produce the few shillings which would give a shelter to a girl in her early

'teens, with a simple wardrobe, and a couple of shillings a week for pocket-money.

It is in these tens of thousands of little homes that the problem of the maximum of comfort at the minimum of expense, is successfully solved in this country, and in no other way than by a temporary residence in them, could the young girls of the lower class, receive so excellent a preparation for ably superintending a house and a family of their own.

The wife of the curate, the clerk, and so on, with their large families and small incomes, may, however, seek and search in vain before they find a girl who will accept their offer of a good home and modest wages, and, above all, a wise training in the first needs of life.

Thus, after a time, the wives described give up the search as hopeless. Consequently, for the evil works both ways, they sink into those furrowed-faced, weary-shouldered women, weighed down by the burden of domesticity, a burden in many cases too heavy for an unaided back to bear, especially when the burden is made more heavy by failing health and many children, those women whom we all pass daily in scores in our streets, wondering, if we have eyes to see and hearts to feel, why it is that their power to enjoy a beauteous life in a beauteous world has been wrested from them.

These women are willing to supply without asking payment or reward, one of the nation's greatest needs, domestic training, a training which would cost the luckless ratepayer hundreds of thousands of pounds if it were furnished by the County Council. Even then it would be utterly inadequate, since it is daily and hourly precept and practice that is needed, not instruction which consists mainly of a repetition of copy-book headlines.

If wise we were, we would devote to the above purpose, some of the treasure we fling into the coffers of the County Council, the treasure we now squander on teaching the

children botany and geology—botany to a child who does not know how to cook a tomato, and geology to a girl who has not learnt how to handle the domestic hearth-stone !

We should, if necessity there were, pay the wife of the lower middle class, the word is used in an elastic sense, and pay her well, for doing what she alone can do, that is, train little Miss East to become a wise, thrifty housekeeper, a wife who will make her home so comfortable that her husband will have no desire to spend his life in the bar of a public-house, and a mother whose babes will not die in their thousands at her own and her sisters' breasts.

However, there would be no need of payment, for doors all over the country would be eagerly opened to those little maids from school, and the Minister of Finance, instead of having to prepare for further outlay, would lighten his existing burden, as the only expense to set against Less-one-year's-girls'-schooling would be a clerk's salary for "keeping the books" at the offices of the already established Associations for Befriending Young Servants, or some similar institution.

There would be no fear that such a suggestion, if carried out on practical lines, would be abused. To exercise general surveillance through the medium of existing associations would be easy. Nor in exercising it, need there be any encroachment on the privacy and the privileges of the home, the mere suggestion of which would naturally be intolerable.

Let the law run that girls, being girls, should leave school at a younger age than boys by one year, and that this year should be dedicated to domestic training.

In this way no parent of the working classes need complain of being deprived of her daughter's services, as she would enjoy them from the same date as she does now, while those on the wrong side of the Poverty Line, would benefit by having the cost of the child's living taken off

their shoulders for the twelve months previous to her usual wage-earning years.

As to possible abuse. The pathetic cases of the ill-treatment of some wretched "slavey" to which attention is drawn at times in the Press, are in most instances those of poor half-witted creatures, the degenerate or the unfit, who qualify neither for workhouse nor asylum, and who are passed over by the Societies for Befriending Young Servants, as not coming within their sphere.

These, the flotsam and jetsam of humanity, drift hither and thither, wanted by none, of practical use to none, till they come in the end perhaps under the thrall of some tyrant, a pariah even as they are themselves, though from another cause; a tyrant who, having none to gainsay her and made hold by impunity, overworks, underpays, underfeeds, and in some cases wreaks vengeance for the wrongs suffered by herself, the oppressor, at the hands of nature or the world.

With the exception of these, the degenerate and the unfit, the domestic servant of the day, from the little General at Clapham to her Grace's Housekeeper at the Castle, knows her own value, and sees to it that others know it too.

Good wage, good bed, good food, opportunity of saving or of spending, permission to see her friends, outings for health or diversion, certain hours of freedom for her own occupations, all these are hers; and if not obtained, she need only threaten to seek them elsewhere, and, unless she is incorrigibly idle, dishonest, self-willed, or incapable, she will straightway have all bestowed by a mistress who fears to lose her.

When the command is vicarious, things go not always well, for East does not invariably prove a good master to East, and the footman who can only reach the ear of his master through the butler, which is not at all, and the kitchen-maid, who is naturally debarred by the cook from

appealing directly to the sympathies of her mistress, are often in a sorry case.

Why should Mr. Madeira be deprived of a third footman or a Buttons because there is no place for the one or the other to sleep, except in that dark, damp hole under the stairs, which the ultimate master had no idea was the intended bed-chamber, when Madeira remarked, "I shall be able to manage about the sleeping accommodation, sir?"

And why should Mrs. Macaroni be deprived of the services of her satellite merely because it was the girl's night out on this particular evening when she had asked a friend in, "Which any other day when I don't want you will do just as well; so go on with your work and don't make no more fuss?"

The superior persons among the working-classes, of course, would scout the idea of their little daughters accepting wages and working for other people. In that case, we should demur at their right to accept Free Education for those daughters, and the sooner that point is raised, the better for the ratepayer's pocket and for the cause of fairness and of reason all over the country.

However, the difficulty of wages, might be solved by designating the money paid as pocket-money. It may also be pointed out that in Germany, where some such plan as this prevails, it is by no means considered a degradation for the daughter of one house to go into residence in another, for the purpose of studying domestic economy under more advantageous conditions than could be the case in her own home. In the land of the Teuton, the daughters of men of good social position and private means are often sent to a restaurant or even to a country inn with the above intent, paying generous fees for the experience they gain.

As opulent tradesmen and wealthy publicans in England now, however, condescend to accept Free Education

for their children, it might be ordained that it should be optional for the Domestic Training-Year to be spent with personal friends or relations, and that the finance question, whether styled wage or pocket-money, should, at desire, remain in abeyance. For obvious reasons, however, the training should in all cases be given in another home than the girl's own.

If this national reform were adopted, any mistress of a well-ordered household of recognised standing, who cared to enter her name in the books kept for the purpose, might be entitled to the services of the little candidates on passing her word that personal supervision and a certain amount of efficient training would be given. Those whose training had been attended with good results, would naturally be allowed to make a selection from among the best and brightest of the little maids on applying in successive years.

Those abodes where waste and extravagance were known, or were surmised, to rule, would be blacklisted till they mended their ways, for it must be permanently borne in mind that a main object of installing the little Ward of the State in these houses, would be to lead them in the ways they should go where thrift and economy were concerned. No mansions of the wealthy, in any position in life, should be included in those available for this purpose, unless for the reception of those girls who elected to take up domestic service as a profession.

Thus and thus, in the Utopian days of the future, might be supplied the crying need of household training.

Thus and thus might happy domestic hearths, where economy and comfort prevailed in equal degrees, be scattered over the length and breadth of the country.

Thus and thus might be solved the problem of physical degeneration, which more than anything, means improper feeding from birth.

Thus and thus might be checked the degrading drink-

habit, which, in three cases out of four among the working-classes, perhaps not among those alone, is contracted through eating unsuitable and badly-cooked food.

And this scheme might be carried out, not at the cost of millions upon millions, as in the case of other so-called reforms, but merely by the application of one ounce of common-sense.

XXIII

“THE OPEN PALM”

BROTHER EAST goes through life with hand outstretched and open palm.

Brother West can rarely be got to reach out his fist, when taking in is concerned.

Now the whole social system has been spoilt by the passing of the penny from the finger tip of West to the pockets of East.

No service rendered by East, is too minute to be unaccompanied by reward.

Standing on Ludgate Hill, ask East to point you out the Cathedral of St. Paul, or, poised on the Monument, beg him to show you the sky. Out shoots his indicator and straightway is it followed by the palm, which must be crossed with coin ere you can wend your way in peace.

You must tip and tip and tip again as you march past the ranks of the working man. Change your gold for silver, your silver for bronze, for you will need it all. The hands outstretched are many and they are insatiable.

Time was when the friendly word, the kindly glance, alone paid service rendered, such service, that is, as had cost nor time nor trouble to the giver, and the nation was the better for it.

It goes ill for the realm when each small courtesy must

be requited in the coin of the realm, when ugly sneer and peevish snarl at once break out if, from principle or from want of means, that coin is not forthcoming.

Should those broken with years and infirmities, should the shoeless street-urchin, the little bent-back bearing a baby sister of weight almost equal to her own, alone give hint that they await your gift, censure would be unneeded. These, however, unless their haunts be sought, but rarely cross your path.

It is for the best part those who have most and need least, who stand foremost in the soliciting of alms.

Bethink you what is meant by the ethics of the tip. The skilled artisan who is earning his three pounds a week will touch his cap, the only time he does touch it, and pocket a gift of perhaps sixpence, and say thank you, sir.

To the curate or the clerk, nine out of ten of whom, as we are told, go through life on an average of £80 in the year, who are out at elbows in every sense but the visible one, you must not even think of offering a present in cash, however much you might wish it. The "black-coated class," Lord Rosebery calls the latter, and compares them to the powerful and prosperous "Handworkers," declaring they are more to be compassionated than any for narrowness of means.

One of the Black coats, a young curate, a University man, has a minute home (almost all the workers among the lower classes are one-roomed men) close to a fine block of workmen's buildings in the Paddington district. For the "East End," is in no sense whatever confined to White-chapel.

As he looks up from his slice of bread, eaten with salt butter on which Mrs. East, his landlady, has levied heavy tribute, he can see the carpenter who is tenant of a small flat on the other side of the street tucking into an excellent "tea" of sausages and jam. Having finished, the

opposite neighbour lights his cigarette, buttons up his overcoat, and strolls away to his pub. It is not much past six o'clock, but his work is done for the day and he has eaten and rested since he threw down his tools at five o'clock.

Half an hour later, the sausage-and-jam man's wife comes begging for soup tickets and an order for the dispensary from Monsieur le Curé, whom she finds brushing the very threadbare suit which covers his back before he, too, goes out for the evening.

He, however, is bound for a couple of hours with his Boys' Brigade, before he goes on to other duties too numerous to mention, ending up with the supervision of the Parish accounts after midnight, but none of this is manual labour, so it does not count.

Don't say the sausage and soup-tickets story is an isolated instance.

If you do, you will merely give proof that you do not know your working-man.

To return to the subject of the tips. Among those who stretch out the hand, is the London cabman, that manly, well-groomed young fellow who is so proud and pleased when you admire his gee ; the well-informed driver who is so interesting a companion as you sit by him on the box seat in the Lake district ; the dustman who, despite his distasteful calling, is physically one of the finest men who enters your gateway ; the splendid son of the Viking who puts your own build and bearing to shame, as you hail him when he hauls up his crab-boat ; the stalwart well-mannered game-keeper on your friend's estate ; the lackey with his muscular form clad in velvet and gold, his fine head trimmed and powdered after the fashion of his master's ancestors on the wall ; the deft-handed swift-footed valet with the grace and elegance of a diplomatist ; the silver-haired majestic monarch of the pantry, who has put by as much money as would send his son to Eton, each and all, to their shame, will "accept," and each and all

will pass a word of contempt upon you, should you leave them without the bribe that buys their good word.

Why is there in this case one law for the rich and another for the poor? Why must the beggar in rags, the poor pariah whom neither East nor West will own, be forbidden to ask a dole, while the indulged and self-indulged household servant, the highly salaried out-door man are all allowed to demand drink-money with an openness and effrontery that put the medicant's whine into the shade.

Truly the tip, not the want of it, makes a more solid barrier between East and West than any other that time or custom has planted there.

Through the tyranny of the tip, unmonied West is prevented from speaking any pleasant word to those below him. He hurries away from his hansom as if he had stolen its cushions, because he cannot afford to give more than the right fare: He sinks into the corner of his railway carriage and rounds his shoulder as though he were ashamed to have made his way into the train, when he has given the porter the limited sum which is all he can afford. He refuses the invitation to visit his life-long friend because the silent solicitations of the retainers of the latter, are beyond what his purse will allow him to contemplate. He avoids bidding a kindly farewell to the small army which his builder brought in to carry out repairs about his house, because the shillings in his pocket would not suffice to go round.

These men are not of the East proper, but East they must remain till they see that in the taking of the tuppence, they descend to a level which is unworthy of their personality and their position.

The West of limited means suffers keenly from his inability to give. Not because pity tells him that here is a need which it behoves him to supply, the thought is laughable when one thinks of the subject, but because he

is doing what every Englishman of his class loathes to do, he is making a departure from an established custom.

Ignore for the moment, the wage you pay to the waiter in the restaurant, since he battles from a different point of view, but abolish the tip general and you will do more to promote kindly feeling and to level the barrier between caste and caste than if you wrote a new law, Thou shalt deal with thy better as thyself.

XXIV

“THAT’S WOMAN’S WORK, THAT IS !”

MR. EAST has been out of work for six months, so Mrs. East, as cleanly and hard-working a little soul as ever tried to sweeten a man’s life, has sought and found a place where she can get an occasional day’s work.

As the husband has no work to do, it is not worth while for him to get up early, so the wife must run round to the public library to look over the advertisements in case there may be a job for him. It is curious to what an extent even an average good husband in the East End, will thrust his obligations on to the bent shoulders of his wife.

On the way to the library, she might call at the pub for his morning’s beer. Then there is the washing of the baby and of the penultimate baby. They do go on so at the nursery if you take the babies in at eight o’clock without washing their faces.

Next there is the dinner to prepare, so that the little daughter of nine can hot it up while mother is away. The family breakfast is to be got over in some fashion, and as much toilet effected for the school-children as time allows.

Finally, there is a little petition to be put up to the husband. The scene of the day’s work is far distant.

The lady may keep her worker rather late, but she will give her the double ’bus fares. Now the latter could save one-half of the sixpence and walk home, if Bill would go and get the babies out of the nursery before it shuts up at 8 P.M. After that time there is a fine imposed, so there must be no doubt as to the punctuality of one of the parents.

Bill wonders in lofty scorn what she takes him for. Him go among a parcel of women and ask for babies! He likes that!

Eventually the little wife comes home with two shillings and the two babies which, since she has perpetrated the ’bus, she managed to capture before closing time.

She is jubilant, having been fed well as well as worked hard during the day, and she displays the two shillings in triumph.

“That all?” says the unsympathetic Bill. “I’d have ’arned four times as much and been home by half-past five if I’d been out at work, and you must be quick over supper and go and look after some new rooms for us. They was in to-day again about clearing us all out, for the house-breakers begin to pull the place down next week.”

“Oh, Bill, can’t you go to look for the rooms. I’m so tired and they won’t let me inside their doors, not one of them, when they hear I’ve got seven children, and the magistrate won’t give me another extension. He told me so last time I went to him.”

“*Me* looking after rooms!” says Bill. “I like that. That’s woman’s work, that is. What would the mates say if they saw *me* looking for a house?”

Yet Bill is an average good husband, and from what Mrs. Bill sees of some others in the court, she thinks she’s very lucky to have got him.

The wife of the working-man is not always all that she might be. She can never hope to attain that level till the day when the liberty of the subject is interfered with to

the extent of it being a legal obligation to satisfy from the weekly wage the claims of the landlord, butcher, and baker before the publican has his share.

The burden of life is most unfairly divided between man and wife in the East.

To begin with, there is the eight or ten hours' day for the man. Suppose a woman with six children, as well as a husband, for whom she must wash and mend and cook and clean, should strike work at five o'clock and say that the supper might get itself ready, the baby cry itself to sleep, and the socks darn themselves, because she doesn't mean to work more than eight hours, not she. Slave-driving ! Garn !

Then for the working-man's wife, the week has no Sunday. A week without a Sunday, without a Rest-day. Of all the ills to which daily life is subject, none excel this. The first day is Mrs. East's hardest day, that when she must labour under more difficult conditions than on any of the other six. The public nursery is then closed, so that she cannot pay her fourpence and get rid of her baby from eight o'clock in the morning till eight at night. All the school-children are at home and sadly in the way. The husband is there too, grumbling at everything, because it's very hard on a man who's at work all the week, that he can't find a bit of comfort in his home of a Sunday.

The charges of prodigality and improvidence so often made against the working man's wife are, as a rule, somewhat unfair.

Those who know her well, declare that Mrs. East usually makes what she has, go wonderfully far.

She has not, of course, the wisdom and thrift so pleasantly prevalent among those of her class in certain countries on the continent of Europe, nor the vigour, resource, and enterprise found in many of the small households of the United States of America.

Still she manages well on the whole, and could she

better withstand the temptations of the tinned-meat shops she would do better still.

Witness the Sunday's dinner of a joint, various vegetables and sauces, "fruit pie" and jam pudding. Things must be bad, indeed, when these do not all appear on the table on the first day of the week. These dishes are usually turned out in a style which would do credit to many a well-paid cook in many a wealthy middle-class household.

The disadvantage of the wife of the working man is that, be she worthy of his confidence or not, she seldom has control of any definite part of her husband's wages.

If she could count on having two-thirds, or one-half, of the total earnings of the family for her household expenditure, placed regularly and definitely at her disposal at the end of the week, she might graduate in domestic economy, and profit by the instruction which is so ably and so assiduously offered her from above.

In those deplorable cases, which become more sadly frequent as time goes on, when, owing to the inebriety of her husband or from some other cause, the wife and mother is also the bread-winner of the family, the possibility of becoming a successful house-wife is naturally almost nil, as the time she should devote to educating herself in that direction, is given to her trade.

A curious point about the women of this class is, that even when they are themselves good cooks and house-keepers, it rarely seems to occur to them to teach their daughters to be the same.

Someone who had noticed what savoury roasts and stews a certain Mrs. East, who had had an eating-house training, was able to produce, volunteered to find the bright little daughter of sixteen a place as general servant, the girl being that rare exception, a young lady who did not object to domestic service.

"Of course Kitty can cook a plain dinner?" said the visitor.

"Oh, no, ma'am, Kitty can't cook," said the mother. "I wish she could."

"But surely you have let her prepare the dinner at home sometimes when you were busy?"

"No, ma'am, I should often have been very glad if she could, but she can't cook."

"But she helped you at least?"

"No, ma'am, she couldn't help, because, as I'm telling you, she *can't* cook."

"Anyhow, she looked on and saw how you did things yourself."

"No, ma'am, she didn't, because, knowing she couldn't cook, I always sent her out with the babies to be out of my way when I began to get the dinner ready."

The bane of the working man's wife, is that she has almost ceased to knit and darn and mend and make, thanks for this being due to the Board Schools. Would that the new brooms of the County Council might sweep away this among other abuses.

A visitor at a Board School was once amused by a remark of the master, that the girls, especially when quite young, were so much quicker at figures than the boys.

"But they don't give them a chance," he added resentfully. "They make them waste two hours a week with their needles when they might be improving their intellect."

Two hours a week for learning how to manipulate the most important implement that is ever placed in the female hand. Poor intellect, what crimes are committed in thy name!

To thee is sacrificed the education of the character, of the temper, of the heart, of the hand, of the eye.

Yet even from the most materialistic point of view,

this is a mistake, for do they not say truly that brains are the cheapest thing you can buy at the present day.

Almost the only condition under which the East End wife proves herself to be really unworthy of holding the purse strings, is when she has given way to drink.

It does not seem to be generally realised that, except in the direction of the tin-meat shop, the extravagances of Mrs. East, of Whitechapel, are few.

To her, once wed, even the wardrobe appears to be without attraction, though if she be British-born, she does not go to the length of some of her alien sisters to be seen in our own East End from Eastern Europe. The latter cover their heads with a neat coiffure of unmistakable horsehair or of coarse black silken strands of uncostly make, an ostentatious strip of white calico representing a "parting," the intent being to prevent the wearer from appearing too attractive in the eyes of the other sex.

Instances of drunkenness among women are unhappily of common occurrence in the East End, but it is some consolation to feel that they appear to be more numerous than they really are.

The spectacle of a drunken woman in the open, even in the foulest of the slums, is sufficiently appalling for the attention of the whole district to be turned to it when it occurs. Also, for the ethics of inebriety are curious, when a woman takes to drink she is not only more irreclaimable than a man, but her vice is more blatantly displayed.

She has, moreover, less opportunity of finding cover ; the very lowest of the East End publicans will hesitate to screen a drunken woman, as the scandal of her proceedings is too glaring. Fortunately, or unfortunately, too, there is less camaraderie in this direction among women than among men, and she will not always find a sister courageous or sympathetic enough to cast a veil over her enormities.

Therefore she becomes Jane Cakebread, and to give way to excess and to make her way to the station, are one and the same thing.

A good male customer at the ale-house will, on the contrary, on becoming inebriated, usually be carefully escorted home by another of that ilk, on a hint to that effect being given him by the publican, and the police-court cases are kept, to a certain degree, within bounds by each man being ready to shield his fellow.

The exceptions to this, are naturally those who have sunk to such a depth of degradation that they have no fellow, or who have become so inflamed that they feel they must count as one of the one thousand five hundred and fifty-five ruffians who make drunken onslaughts on the police in the course of the year.

With these exceptions, a man is generally able to conceal his infamy, and he will often for years successfully maintain an outward semblance of respectability, even when he is drinking away one-half of his weekly wage.

XXV

“WHEN WEST GOES UNDER”

“THAT pore Countess of West ! I saw her out with her market basket on her arm one day. And they do say she helps to do her own washing-up. A girl of fifteen is all as she’s got now, pore thing. Lives at the World’s End, beyond Chelsea way. It would have been more decent if she’d taken herself abroad. There’s Boulong and places like that, is best for such. Thank you, Mr. Madeira, I think I will take another plate of that aspic as you’re so pressing. It goes very well with your old marsala.”

Mr. Madeira, it may be remarked in passing, is usually known as the Marquis of Westshire, while Miss Personal is the Duchess of Westhamleigh, as, of course, the principal inmates of the housekeeper’s room bear the titles of their own employers, and are thus announced on their entry and introduced to the other members of the aristocracy below stairs.

The sympathy and self-abnegation shown by certain of the Wests for the Easts is a striking feature in the social system of the present day. The hardness and indifference of the Easts when they come in contact with the Wests in the time of trouble of the latter are, however, as a rule sadly to the fore.

The men and women of gentle birth who leave in part or altogether their luxurious homes, their intellectual pursuits,

and the companionship of such as are of their own tastes and position, that they may thereby benefit the class below their own, are very numerous. The Religious Sisterhoods, the Oxford and Cambridge Settlements, the Inns of Court and other Lay Missions, the wards of the Hospitals, the clergy-houses with their celibate priests, Church Army, Charrington Hall, Toynbee Hall, and similar communities are full of them. They have their reward, but, as an East End priest, who very literally gave his life for his people, said, it is not in the gratitude of those they serve, that they find that reward.

Domestic service is, of course, the point at which the Easts come most nearly in contact with the Wests.

Baring Gould, who perhaps flings down the barrier between class and class more daringly than does any other writer of the day, gives vent to his ideas in one of his most remarkable works of fiction.

Here a lord of great lands, without being either gambler or spendthrift, is brought face to face with destitution, through his sheer ignorance of the manipulation of money.

As matters approach a crisis, the Servants' Hall meets to consider ways and means. Economies, it is understood, must be effected, and some of the inferior servants may have to be dismissed, but the Housekeeper, the Cook, the Butler, and the Coachman, with their own special attendants, decide, of course, to remain. Are not the Castle and its appurtenances maintained mainly for them? With magnificent effrontery they decide that this and that relative of the Duke must leave his residence.

Eventually the daughter of the house, the sweet and lovable Lady Grace, is mentioned. Cook and Co. at first resolve to keep her on under her parents' roof, but on further consideration, they see that Lady Grace would be a great additional expense in the household, and public opinion declares that Lady Grace ought to have got herself married

long ago and freed her father's retainers of the expense of her "keep." It is her own fault that she is not married. She is a costly item in the week's expenditure, and she must go.

The disgust of Mrs. Rawdon Crawley's household at the behaviour of their mistress in regard to finance is only expressed when the ruin of their mistress is proclaimed, when the chicken and champagne which answer in such houses for daily bread, are about to be withdrawn.

And it was not only Lady Blessington who found to her astonishment in her downfall, that the maid she had loaded with gifts and overwhelmed with kindnesses, is the first to leave her to be tended only by the little page who brought up "'am and eggs and kitchen tea."

In houses great and small alike, whatever else runs short, the servants' wages are for the most part assured. Yet few and far between are those dependants who on watching the last desperate efforts of impecunious peer or, for the matter of that, of struggling clerk to keep afloat, will raise a finger to help the sinking man or refrain from playing their part in forcing him on, before his time, towards the whirlpool that lies ahead.

And not for one moment, will they allow him to super-vise things below-stairs that he may help himself.

I heard an amusing story, which also happened to be true, of one of the greatest financiers of the present day, who, to prevent the continuation of the scandalous "waste" of his own household, put all his servants on board-wages. These he duly paid, then turned to the rest of his household books. From them he learned that the total expenses for the month, were exactly the same as if he had paid no board-wages whatever.

The electric light is burnt on throughout the servants' quarters, attic and basement, during the night; the stale loaf goes uncut into the dust-bin as of old; the half-eaten chop and steak are flung to the poodle; the extra half-

gallon of milk is ordered to replace that allowed to go sour in the bowl; the scuttle of coals is emptied into the well-filled furnace of the kitchen, that the next bonus from the coal merchant may come the sooner; the blind eye is turned on to the butcher's short weight and the grocer's faulty measures, and the refusal to allow the employer to deal at the Stores, where full allowance and no commission are given, is stern and unflinching as of yore, and this commission, which has driven more employers to bankruptcy than anything, is extorted from the luckless tradesman more rigidly than ever, seeing it is so soon to come to an end.

Meanwhile the lady's maid and the valet, although they but now glanced side by side over the pile of dunning letters which brought such anxiety to the brows of their employers, complain to each other that Missis is that mean she has been asking where her second-best slippers have gone to now, and Master has ordered his last year's Norfolk jacket back to his room instead of getting a new one. Cheeseparing that the lady's maid and the gentleman's gentleman do not mean to put up with much longer.

The race which in days of old, followed its fallen employers into poverty, sharing their privations as it had hitherto enjoyed their wealth, has died out.

One case the writer calls to mind, pathetic from its very tonelessness, its simplicity, that of the attendant of a gentle and delicately-nurtured girl, the health and spirit of the latter having alike been broken through the violence of her sudden fall upon evil days, and who once, not in bitterness, for that was contrary to her nature, but in sorrowful apathy, spoke of an old servant who had found a luxurious home in the establishment of the girl's father for two score years.

"She retired soon after they died, when our poor home was broken up," said the girl. "She said she had saved some money and need not take another place. She comes to me now and then when she hears I am unwell, and pre-

tends to look after me and to do up my clothes, but she always carries off everything I have that is worth anything, saying they are in my way and that she is sure I don't want them. I suppose it is because she was always accustomed to do that kind of thing to me before, in the days when perhaps it did not so much matter. Last time it was my summer's hat ; to-day it was some boots. She knows I have no money to buy any more, but still she takes them, and before long she won't have left me a thing. Yet I thought we all used to be very good to her in the old days at home."

Would to Heaven, for the sake of others who are as that sweet-souled girl, that this instance could be said to stand alone.

The Easts always think and act as though all persons of the name of West, were millionaires. In any case, as though their financial resources were illimitable at such points as they may come in contact with the house of East. They recognise no medium.

When the fact that the contrary is the case, and that the inability of West to meet the demands made on him is too self-evident to be ignored, their contempt becomes unbounded.

To them henceforth, he is *déclassé*, outcast. He is no longer one with his own world. Not because he has no money. If he be West, he is supposed to be able to stagger on very well indeed for a time even after his money has gone, not for that reason, but because he is unable to bear, as heretofore, on his shoulders the responsibility of the lives of a given number of the Easts, his dependants.

Their disdain for him is first veiled, then expressed in terms and with an accent that is a revelation to those in whose employment they once were.

The terms *déclassé* and outcast are used in their fullest sense. If West cease to be Brahmin, he is henceforth pariah. For him no intermediate caste is open.

The Easts, moreover, are the first to explain, and in the most unmistakable terms, that West, through lack of funds and credit, having forfeited his former estate, must expect no countenance from them.

There is no middle course, for him extinction, annihilation. Thus runs the verdict of those who till now have eaten of his bread, who till now have enjoyed the shelter of his roof. Exceptions there are, kindly and devoted, but how lamentably few, while all over England are to be found families of the name of West, who have been gradually forced into the abyss by the waste and the rapacity of their retainers, sometimes by means that are sadder still. Be it not forgot, moreover, when ruin comes to the family of West that family "goes under," while East, as represented by the domestic staff of that house, merely "moves on," and starts its malversations on other fields afresh.

Unless in the case of want of sobriety, of an unfortunate marriage, or of very flagrant depredations, it rarely happens that an upper servant does not retire long before the dawn of old age, with a very fair capital for buying a public-house, a boarding-house, or for the purchase of an annuity.

Few, very few, of the domestic-servant class, on the contrary, do not include among their experiences the spectacle of the downfall of more than one kindly and generous employer who has no such well-lined nest awaiting him. If, as is possible, indignant protest be made against these assertions, let the retainer answer the question fair and square. Have you who protest, made a practice or not of accepting commission from the tradespeople who supply your master's table and coal-cellar, his glass-house and stable-yard? Is it the rule or the exception for those of your own position in other houses, to do this? Did you or did you not turn a blind eye on the waste in the household, in order that these commissions should be the more heavy or the more frequently paid? Did you or did you not

lend a helping hand to stem this extravagance when your employer gave a hint to that effect, and you saw from his haggard brow and anxious eye how grave and urgent had now become his need?

But the disdain of the domestic, which represents the aftermath, and which may be, and usually is, regarded by that employer with indifference, the criminal waste of the kitchen, the brazen appropriations from the wardrobe and the wine-cellar, the blackmail levied under the guise of commissions on the tradesmen, are not the only blows which East, when in service, frequently aims at West.

How often is the good name of the benefactor, to whom almost all that makes life worth having, is owed by the dependant, besmirched in butler's pantry and servants' hall. How often is an evil construction put on the mere girlish gaiety and lightness of heart of a young wife, and how often has a false light been cast upon some indiscretion, deplorable in the extreme, perhaps, but stopping far short of actual wrong-doing. How often has the complication, for which explanation was not at once forthcoming, through motives of pride, of expediency, or of mere indifference and ignorance, been increased by baleful whispers from below, till all explanation is unavailing.

A terrible phrase, terrible alike in its wording and its inner meaning, was coined by one who had himself been stretched on this sordid yet grisly rack. "So many servants, so many spies," he wrote. So many servants so many spies! Why did he drop that poison into our lives. Most of us have to endure its presence at some time; why force us to recognise its existence before necessity compels?

For the most part, these animadversions are made from a mere love of gossip and evil-speaking, and without direct ill-intent, revenge, or the like, and sometimes they only—only—cause constraint and reserve to dwell where previously there was affection and trust.

In other cases, instances of which can be called to mind by most, not only has the sanctity of the home been invaded, but its very existence wrecked and lives made desolate by the garbled testimony, sometimes even the deliberate falsehood, of the world downstairs.

What wonder, considering the false witness and the perjuries which have been presented to it, that the Bench should now almost universally discredit the testimony of the domestic servant in the Courts of Law.

XXVI

“IT AIN’T FAIR ; GOVERNMENT OUGHTER SEE
TO IT !”

FOLLOW to your gate the tramp to whom has been given a thick slice of bread. “This,” he mumbles, venomously, “is the third house within a mile where they’ve give me bread without a bit of meat, barrin’ a lump of fat and a mutton bone. What’s the use of cartin’ great ‘eavy luggage like this about the country. Chuck it’s the word ! Here goes for over the hedge !”

So over the hedge goes the bread, where it serves as a football to a scare-crow boy, while the tramp goes on to whine in the neighbouring farmyard that he has had nothing to eat for four and twenty hours.

Would the extra farthing on the Poor Man’s Loaf, which has been threatened now and again, be as great an infliction as is generally supposed ? Ask the Dustman. He knows more of the matter than anyone. He will tell you that he carries away many hundred-weight of bread in the course of the year. Not merely tops and bottoms and odds and ends, but whole loaves, forgotten for a triplet of days, then cast aside as unfit for the dainty palate of to-day.

After the very richest, the very poorest are the worst delinquents in this direction. The East End curate will admit that this is true. He comes from some squalid

chamber, where he has been told, and told truly, that there is not a mouthful of bread for the children ; then, as he thoughtfully and sadly fingers the linings of his empty pockets, wondering by what new act of self-denial he can himself supply the need, he stumbles over a mound of broken bread in the roadway, and wonders how the within can be reconciled to the without.

In countries where no highway or byway remains untrodden by the feet of the Little Sisters of the Poor, these scraps would not lie long. They would be gathered up, rubbed and washed by the slim white fingers of one who is perhaps a scion of the house of Colonna, de Rohan, or Lichtenstein, then turned into a dish which, so far as its outward appearance is concerned, might be placed on the table at the Hotel Bristol.

England is the only country in the world where the lower orders eat white bread, as are aware all who have studied the question of the foodstuffs of the universe. Consider the strange concoction of rye, maize, beans, bark and straw that forms the staff of life for the majority in Italy, Spain, and Turkey and Egypt, not to name the dark-coloured but more wholesome preparations that are eaten in the countries of the Norseman and the Teuton. Try to set your teeth into the swarthy brickbat which represents the staff of life to the Russian Mujik, who is so busily occupied in feeding Europe from his own glorious cornfields, that he has no time to hake for himself a loaf worthy of the name.

Anent the waste of white bread, Grimm's ever-green volume of fairy lore, tells that at one time the ears of corn grew down to the foot of the stalk, but a wasteful woman, mother of the millions of to-day, caught up a handful of the laden stems to clean the frock of her child who had fallen into the mire. At that, the Angel of Plenty, with the aid of a shaft of light from the Sun, swept down upon the scene, and, reprimanding the woman in his wrath,

declared that henceforth the stalk should bear fruit for a couple of inches only from its tip.

A chatty veteran in a great Government Institution, I may say the greatest Government Institution, told me of a new use he had discovered for the surplus crusts of the world. He was a grand old man and had done much for his country in his day, but his early training was against him. Waste, waste and waste again was the motto which had been instilled into him in early youth, and that teaching had clung to him through life.

"See there, sir," said he, pointing to the patch of clove pinks and potatoes which the rules of the establishment allowed him to cultivate for his own profit, "nothing makes such good manure for your flowers as a penny loaf. Unless, maybe, it's tapioca pudding," he added reflectively.

"I never had much liking for bread myself," he went on, "so I stows away all they gives me away in my jacket. Then I asks for more, and after that I gets my neighbours to give me all they can reach. Nobody ever notices it, and I soaks it in water and tucks it all away under the roots of the plants. Bread's best, but every sort of food comes in handy. There's beef and mutton down there," he continued, pointing triumphantly at his garden, "and there's mashed potatoes, and there's greens and beetroot and an orange or two. It all serves to make my plants grow."

I had an idea at the time, of betraying the old scoundrel's confidences to the proper authorities, but with the average person's hatred of interference, I refrained, and my friend doubtless still pursues his nefarious career.

A baker of the little seaside town of Sherringham, in Norfolk, once confiding his troubles to me, said: "This penny-a-loaf bread does no good to anyone. Nearly half of what we send out, goes into the dustbin. Our hours are longer and our work harder than those of anyone in the country, yet we starve on the trade and so does the

farmer. The wages I give my men are a disgrace, yet I can't help it, for my own profits are next to nothing, though I work as hard in the bakehouse as any of them and do a good deal of the carrying round myself too. I should have been in the Bankruptcy Court years ago, if I hadn't a good, clever little wife who keeps the books for me, as well as minds the shop. A baker's trade is more unhealthy than most, living as we do in the furnace at one moment and going round the town the next, yet we can hardly live by it, not those of us that sells the loaf at people's prices and over the counter, as I do. Of course if you go in for fancy breads and short weights you're all right.

"No, no, sir," he went on in reply to a demur from myself, "I don't mean nothing dishonest when I talks of short weights. It's this way. The law says you're to sell the loaf full weight and set it on the scales as proof, if you're asked to. Well, no loaf is ever made full weight by any baker in the present day, not when it's baked, but we know at a glance which of our customers wants full weight, so we weighs it even before we're asked to, and sets a roll or a thick slice on the scale by it as make-up. None of us ever sells a loaf which don't want a piece of make-up big enough for a breakfast, a woman's or a child's breakfast, anyhow. Well, the sent-out orders don't get weighed, though they would if it was asked for, so in consequence they're all short weight by intent, and we comes a little nearer our rights there.

"Then the law don't ask you to weigh fancy breads," my baker went on. "It don't matter what your loaf is, but directly you call it the Milk Maid or the Fairy Food, or anything but just plain bread, you may make it what weight you please, and sell it at what price you please, and no one interferes. Same with penny rolls. Some of the quality likes their penny roll for breakfast, and there's more profit on that than anything, and there's no standard weight for

it either. But my own trade lies with the Pay-across-the-counter People, and there's little profit to be made out of them, though, because the loaf's so cheap, they waste it more than anyone. I don't blame 'em for their waste, for they was born to it ; but us bakers oughter have a proper profit. It ain't fair as things is now, that it ain't, and Government oughter see to it."

With the deepest reluctance I am compelled to add that the noble charitable institutions established all over the country, refuges for the aged, cripples' homes, asylums for paralytics and the like, frequently sin as flagrantly as any in this direction. When the official inspector next calls at one of these, when the visitor with a generous cheque in contemplation, next comes down, after they have seen the dormitories with their diamond windows and snowy boards, the bathroom with its tiled floor and sanitary wall paper, the kitchen with its well-blackened grate and glittering cooking utensils, let them ask permission to go to the back of the buildings and raise the cover of the dust-bin, when they will see what they will see ! The first time I did this myself it was by accident and not of malice pre-pense, and the result made me even more uncomfortable than were the matron and the president of the institution, who were by my side.

XXVII

“LALLY, THE PAUPER, PLAYS BRIDGE!”

“HE wants to get away from the slave-driver, to get away and be a man.”

That is a favourite phrase of the Social Agitator when he wishes either to take a shot at the employer, or to advocate an all-round eight hours' day.

By all means, if you are under the sway of a slave-driver, get away from him with all possible speed. If you're not a man while you are at your work, more's the pity. In that case it would certainly be advisable that you should become one in your hours of leisure.

Now how does the workman spend his hours of leisure? I think I might challenge eighty per cent. of those I meet, to answer this question without getting a reply.

In many cases the British artisan, and he is the only working man in Europe of whom this can be said, in addition to the first day, gets to himself the whole of Saturday from twelve o'clock noon, sharp, onward.

“We pay them to work up to one o'clock,” said a builder to me grimly one day, “but I'd like to see any employer who'd get them to work after twelve noon. That's the time they get their pay, and that's the time they lay down their tools.”

Twelve o'clock Saturday morning to six or seven o'clock

on Monday morning, forty-two hours or more on end. It is a very nice weekly holiday, Monsieur l'Ouvrier, and I don't grudge it you, but how do you spend it?

The leisure of the better class of working men, the Upper Ten, those who would scorn ever to be out of work, in the sense in which the term is generally used at the present time, those who hold the Unemployed singing up and down the street in direct contempt, is beyond inquiry. They have an orderly home for family life, they have exclusive clubs, or rooms in which they can meet, in high-class public houses in town, while the better clubs in the picturesque village inn are often conducted in a manner which is to the credit of the whole countryside. They have the decent suit in which they stride about the world as the first and most respected representatives of King Labour, and they may be left to manage their affairs in this and other matters for themselves.

But for that other, the sadly-misnamed working man, a little black sprite whispers in my ear that he tucks into a very big square meal on Saturday as soon as he handles his wages, that he lounges at the corner pipe in mouth all afternoon, and that he spends the evening in the public house. That he sleeps all Sunday morning, gets his boots blacked at a quarter to one, and enters the public house punctually when it opens its doors at one o'clock. He spends from one-thirty to three-thirty or four o'clock at the Sunday dinner. He goes to sleep for a couple of hours after dinner. He reads *The Sporting Life* over his excellent tea when he wakes up, spoiling the meal by the pipe he smokes at the same time, and he goes to "the pub" again on Sunday evening.

Thus my little black sprite; but I don't believe him, I don't! The Social Agitator said the workman gets away from his work in order that he may be a man, and I will believe that Social Agitator or I will die.

I find, however, on looking through my telescope, that the scene is blurred and vague.

The workman goes somewhere and he does something which is to his credit, but where and what I do not know.

He doesn't go to the museums or picture galleries except at very rare intervals, when he wants shelter from the rain. He does not loiter his time away in talking to his friends at the restaurant on Sunday, for it is closed, and I am sure that what someone pithily though unpleasantly described as the pestiferous person lying about Kensington Gardens, is not the man who is honestly seeking for employment. Some stand about the parks to listen to the stump orator, take the steamboat to Greenwich or the train to Richmond, but those who have followed him about, say that while the small clerk, the small employer, and the small shopkeeper wisely haunt these latter resorts by their tens of thousands, the average hand-worker is rarely to be seen there.

If he be of athletic tendencies, our friend pays his shilling and goes to see a football match. Cricket, too, he can endure in its season, though it does not appeal to him in the sense that does footer, whether it be rugger or soccer, but he harbours no envy and jealousy of those who excel in these fields.

Thanks to the cleric, whose athleticism is now a part of his creed, most boys play games a good deal between their tenth and their twentieth year, but when that is past, physical exercise as a pastime comes to an end. Things here are on the mend, thanks again to the cleric, who knows neither rest nor pause so far as the British boy is concerned, but at the present moment we have under consideration not the British boy, but the British man, and again we ask what does he do with his leisure, what does he do with his time from Saturday noon to Monday morning.

We have all read lately how the Primate of all England spent his Whitsuntide holiday; many of us fainted on learning the amount he got through in the way of official correspondence, making ready of sermons and speeches, preparation of candidates for ordination, consecration of cemeteries, administration of baptismal and matrimonial rites, dispensation of patronage and so on.

A young Oxonian while considering the difference between the holiday of the Archbishop and that of the working-man, said he wouldn't mind letting the latter off all that the Primate did, but he did wish Mr. East would spend part of his holiday in having a wash.

The East End reads marvellously little, the sporting columns of the evening paper excepted. Some libraries, in order to fight this foible, follow the practice of the Russian Press censor, and blacken out the racing news, while sternly refusing to include sporting papers in their lists. When the authorities decided to ruin the writer and lay a new burden on the shoulders of the taxpayers by building and stocking the Free Library, the chief argument used was that the working-man was pining for wholesome literature and that it was as far beyond his reach, as before the days of Caxton. From the moment the free library was opened, the working man of the unemployed type, ceased to pine for literature of any kind whatever, either wholesome or unwholesome. He rolls into the reading-room at times, opens the popular *Pearson's* or *Pall Mall*, lays his arms across its pages and his head upon his arms, then goes comfortably to sleep till prodded in the back by the curator of the room who has been incited thereto by an irate habitué who covets for himself that soporiferous *Pearson's* or *Pall Mall*. It would be wise and well to attach a sleeping-room to all public libraries where the man of the kind described, could be comfortably stowed away. He would then be happy himself and he need not interfere with the enjoyment of others. There is no sleeping in the

boys' room across the passage, that department which, when they were first established, all self-respecting libraries promptly opened and stored with the best. The British boy, bless him, from his grimy hand to his cheery heart, the British boy loves reading and will even obey the rule of not talking, nor fighting, nor fidgetting, nor tearing the pages, nor turning them over with a wet finger and thumb, if by no other means can he obtain access to his splendid *Boys' Own Paper* and *Boys' Magazine*.

He will stick his telegrams discreetly in his pocket, hide away his parcels under the bench, and give his basket in charge of a chum, in order to devote ten minutes to finding out how Messenger Boy Mike and Baker Boy Bill got that derelict off the rocks and sailed away with her to the Sea of Japan, where they managed to sink a Russian gun-boat before they came home again.

But from the time the British Boy of the Submerged Tenth, and that other Tenth above it which is partially submerged, leaves his years of delightful indiscretion behind him, he seems to lose his power of reading, together with so many of his other fine qualities, and whatever else he does, the working man, with the exceptions quoted, does not spend his leisure in reading.

Nor yet does he patronise indoor games. The French mechanic will play dominoes for hours at a time, whether in the Quartier Latin or in the little village in Picardy. It seems strange that he should find amusement therein, but he does so; and it certainly serves to train him in concentrating his attention and founding habits of thought; but in England, the only person who plays dominoes is the baby in the well-to-do nursery and the adult Jew. The latter, until he becomes thoroughly Anglicised, is very fond of the game, but I do not know that his British brother has any substitute for it.

I am not sure that Bridge has yet become popular among the Unemployed, though there are hopes that it

may do so, as I am told that it is played by paupers. Michael Lally and Jeremiah McCarthy were enjoying themselves at the game the other day in the Birr Workhouse, when a dispute arose about a revoke. Lally butted Jerry with his head, Jerry retaliated on Lally with his fist. The authorities, being unable to pronounce on the knotty point of the revoke, referred the matter to a local magistrate, who sent Lally to gaol for a month, and we hope that before the Bridger is free again, a question will be raised as to whether a man who has strength and energy sufficient to play Bridge and to butt his fellow creatures, ought to be living a life of leisure at the cost of the ratepayer.

The only question is whether it would not prove even more costly to set Lally to work than to let Lally play Bridge. The Local Government Boards have declared that the cost of the work done by the Unemployed is estimated to have exceeded between fifty and seventy-five per cent., the expenditure which would have been necessitated at ordinary times. One Report ran thus: “Many to whom relief was given, were very poor workers, others were too idle to earn a living, many of them give great trouble, and many have evidently never been accustomed to hard manual labour.”

The total cost of the Unemployed Labour in London during the six months ending March 31, 1905, was £112,000.

On further reflection, I decide to send Lally back to the Birr Workhouse, when he comes out of gaol. It will be pleasanter for him, and much cheaper for me, than setting him to work.

I have made heavy demands on my intelligence in an endeavour to discover what the working man does with his leisure, but have only succeeded in discovering what he does not do. In plain English, I find that for the most part, to get away and be a man, means to merely get away and eat and drink all you can.

On the Sunday, the working man eats and drinks and smokes inordinately, and sleeps inordinately, too ; for if you eat and drink almost beyond your powers, it behoves you also to sleep to the full extent of your powers.

Now if your resources be limited and you spend money recklessly on feasting at the beginning of the week, it follows, as does the night the day, that you must often starve, or something unpleasantly near it, on the other days of the week. To do this is to attack your staying powers, for over-indulgence, followed by even temporary privation, works havoc in this direction, as everyone knows, and likewise has the disadvantage of permanently injuring your digestion. Here, again, the question of physical degeneration strides in, booted and spurred. You can live on a very small sum of money indeed per week, but ill ensues if that sum be not properly administered and evenly distributed.

The Kings of the Soup-Kitchens, and they are not vegetarians either, have proved that we can live, and live well, on three shillings a week. Others who have no soup-kitchen at command, have testified that we can flourish on five or six shillings a week. Ask Miss Patricia West and the Hon. and Rev. Oxbridge West how much they spend on their food from the moment they dedicate their lives to the East End.

You won't believe their replies, but it will do you good to hear them.

XXVIII

“WE’VE GOT NO WORK TO DO!”

“WE’VE got no work to do! No work to do. Pity us poor Unemployed, for we’ve got no work to do!”

That means, my dear friend, that you have got no work of the kind you like, at the pay you like, to be done in the way you like, and at the time you like.

Can any one of you accuse yourselves of ever in your lives, having done a stroke of work that you were not compelled to do, or worked one moment’s overtime if you were not paid for overtime?

When you were down at the sea and saw three or four fishermen trying to beach a heavy boat that was beyond their strength, did you ever stretch out a hand?

When you saw a toiled woman struggling under a heavy bundle of washing, as you strolled homewards at the end of your short working day, did you ever give her a quarter of an hour’s ease by throwing the load over your own shoulder?

Did you ever make a practice of leaving your home five minutes earlier in the morning, that you might help that poor old newsagent to pull down the shutters which so cruelly taxed his failing powers?

When you saw the piles of autumn leaves growing bigger and bigger each day, in that house at the corner inhabited by two decrepit old ladies of uncertain income,

who were waited on by a servant as feeble as themselves, did it ever occur to you to suggest that you should sweep up those leaves each morning for a nominal sum, coming out half an hour earlier for the purpose than your work compelled, yet you remember that aged and ailing though they were, the two ladies took it in turns to sit up night after night, with your sick wife two years ago?

Gratuitous labour apart, almost anyone with a small garden in town would pay a shilling a week to have the dead leaves swept up each morning, but what man or boy would condescend to earn that shilling?

Did you ever suggest to the hardworking Rector's wife when you called for your sick child's mutton broth, that you should carry that second little pail at the same time, to your crippled neighbour's delicate daughter? You know that if you don't take it, Mrs. Rector, who is not only overworked but far from strong, must walk down that long muddy lane with it herself. When you saw her do this the other day, did you not growl to yourself that she might just as well have taken your Polly's broth at the same time, instead of making you go out of your way for it. You complain that she did not give further help to you. Still it did not occur to you to help her, and it surprises you very much indeed to think that anyone should even imagine that you would think of helping her.

"In our village they always ask if we couldn't ourselves bring round the soup and pudding we give them," said Miss Rector cheerfully. "We just take no notice and pretend not to hear them. When I first came home from school, I used to try as a matter of principle to get them to do us some little service for their own good, in return for any they received. I proposed to one family, whom we had helped all through the winter, that their boys should take it in turn to clean the bike, or roll the lawn, or drive the cows home, as our only man is seventy-five

years old, but it merely caused discontent and ill-feeling, as my father warned me it would, so I gave it up."

The problem of voluntary labour is one beyond the comprehension of the handworker. That anyone should work without being obliged to work, should work for the love of his work, is incomprehensible to him. He always ends therefore by explaining to himself that the worker only does it on account of some payment or advantage gained, of which he, the critic, does not happen to have heard.

A remark which often distresses that never-ending worker, the hospital-nurse, when she is new to the scene of her labours, is that she is paid to do all she does.

When here and there a poor sufferer murmurs grateful and heartfelt thanks for the ineffable sweetness with which he is tended and cared for, the occupant of a neighbouring couch will constantly growl out: "You needn't thank her, she's paid to do it," looking upon the three-halfpence a day, it works out at something in that direction, I believe, as adequate return for all the devotion of the nurse's strong young life.

I lately showed an out-of-work man who lived near me how to fit a pane of glass into the window of an outhouse. It was easy enough, for the place had been measured with care, and the glazier had cut the glass according to his instructions.

When I gave the man his tip, I said: "Now, when you see a broken window at the house of one of your neighbours, just you mend it for him for practice. My glazier will supply the glass free, if you tell him I'll call and pay for it later."

"And who's to pay me for my work?" suspiciously said the representative of the Unemployed.

"No one," I replied with courage; "you'd only be doing it for practice to learn a bit of a trade. You've no regular work to do at present. It would do you no harm to help a neighbour."

"Put in the glass for nothing!" exclaimed my man with infinite disgust. "Me work for nothing! Thank you, governor, but if it's all the same to you I'm off, and I'll let the glass stop with the glazier."

Then he shambled away, looking discontentedly at my sixpence, and saying he might have been earning money if he hadn't wasted his time listening to me talking of working for nothing. "Working without pay! I like that. Catch me!"

Do you ever, my dear friend East, give a lesson in the things you can do, to the little son when you get home soon after six o'clock on a summer's afternoon, with nearly three hours' daylight still before you? The boy would go proudly round boasting to his chums of the instruction he had had from his father, if such were the case. It would keep him off the streets and you out of the public house, and it would make both you and your son see that it was a good and wise plan to at times engage in labour, beyond the stipulated task at the stipulated price, which is alone what work means for you at present.

Part of your duty as a citizen, as well as a father, is to teach your boy how to usefully employ his head and his hands in his hours of leisure. You will reply when this is suggested: "County Council schools must do that; they're paid to do it." That may be so, but the Ratepayer does not relieve you of every duty to your family, though it takes off your shoulders most of those placed by Providence upon them.

The ideal work for the average man among the Unemployed, is that of delivering circulars.

You stroll at your ease about the town, you fling half-a-dozen copies down this area, a single one down the next; you shelter in the pub when it rains, you distribute all your papers in the houses on the shady side of the road when the sun is too strong on the other. For this, however, you are paid only two-and-six a day. Two-and-six! It's too little;

why not make it five shillings, and let it form the occupation of the whole army of Unemployed. All those 127,000 persons who received Poor Law Relief in London alone in the Christmas of 1904.

The work needs no training, no exertion, no experience ; you have no master fussing round you, and only the householder, and he doesn't blab, knows that you forgot the letter-box and put six circulars instead of one on to his doorstep, and that the wind promptly blew them all away.

XXIX

“EACH ILL HAS ITS REMEDY—A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION ”

“ As a practical man, do you see any solution for this Out-of-work problem ? ” I said to my friend the master builder on another occasion.

“ Certainly, sir, it's plain as a pikestaff, but whether you gentlemen will see your way to adopt the plan, is another thing.

“ Now mind you, sir, my idea only concerns the shiftless, spiritless Won't-workers, not the Can't-workers, those that were either born too slack to do anything, or have let themselves grow too slack to do anything. That sort's beyond me. Some of you gentlemen have invented an idea of being born tired. That's one of the many things which prove you're on the wrong track ; say born slack or born do-nothing if you like, but don't say born tired. There's very little work in my trade, or in many others that I know of, that is physically tiring, not now the hours are so limited. As for being mentally tiring, there's no such thing till you get to be a foreman or a master, when the hardest part of your work, that which your training has least fitted you for, I mean the estimates and specifications, has to be done after the eight or nine hours given to superintending the hand-workers is over.

“ Just fix in your mind that a workless man is a worthless

man as a rule—not always, but nearly always. I'm talking of hand-workers, of course, not brain-workers, that's a different thing. As they say, brains are the cheapest thing going at the present day, and it's a pity as it is so.

"Well, then, leave the Can't-workers for someone else to deal with. For the rest of them, I say let all that have been driven either by accident or misfortune to accept public relief, either through the parish direct or by these forced jobs, work that doesn't need doing, but is just made up for the occasion, let them all be placed under supervision for twelve months' time, counting from the day they first applied for the relief.

"It's no need to be police supervision," my builder went on, "that of the Guardians, or of that universal County Council of yours, will do just as well, and will look better.

"Well, by my way, directly the man or any of his children for whom application for relief had been made, obtained work, he would have to notify it at the Bureau provided for the purpose. Of course, we employers would have a share in the work, as the directors of the new scheme would have to come to us for vouchers as to what the man had earned. Better still, to save complications, we should have to pay the wages to the Bureau direct.

"Then the man must for one entire year, give an account of how his wages are spent. His landlord, his five tradesmen, he never has but five, butcher, baker, grocer, and greengrocer, and fishmonger, would be paid direct from the office, and he'd get no pocket money, that is, beer money, till those accounts had been settled.

"Well, if his earnings only covered these necessary expenses through the good months of the year, you'd know it was not the man's own fault if he couldn't support himself in the winter. Then you'd be glad to lend him a helping hand next cold weather, though if you did so, that would mean another year's supervision.

"However, most of them would earn more than just their board and keep, but they wouldn't have the handling of the surplus, for it must be set aside to support their families through the winter. If it were enough for this, they'd begin the next year free and independent and be allowed to go their own way, till they got into trouble again.

"You'd not make it a matter of reproach, that the man was under supervision. That's why I propose keeping the police away from him. There'd be no slur upon him. You'd merely show that he was shiftless and improvident, incapable of earning a proper wage if left to himself, or incapable of spending it suitably when he had earned it.

"Of course they wouldn't like the supervision. It's not to be expected that they should, but then they wouldn't like starvation or penury or any other infliction they bring on themselves either.

"By doing this, the first and foremost step you'd gain, would be separating the sheep from the goats, and if ever you're going to reform the world, that's the first step you've got to take.

"There's not enough incentive in the present day to be thrifty and sober and hard-working, let alone to make yourself a skilled practical workman," continued my builder with emphasis, "you mark my words, sir, there's not enough incentive. You can't get the man who's all this, to see that he scores much over the fellow who only works when he pleases, and when he doesn't please has someone to look after him and his wife and children as well. Now by my plan, if you were shiftless and lazy, you'd have to suffer from it, just as you do now if you're dishonest and given to brawling in the street. What's the difference between them in the long run? Tell me that, sir.

"By doing this, too, you'd educate the working man, and let me tell you, sir, with all respect, you're treating him very unfairly, when you don't educate him. I don't

mean through those facts and figures that it amuses you to set down before him in the County Council schools, without taking the trouble to find out that he doesn't know what they're driving at, and never will. The average man of the lowest class, he that is next door to the degenerates, is born with tendencies to idleness and shiftlessness, perhaps to thieving and drunkenness as well, but we won't take those into account at present.

"Well, you've got to root all these out and put in good useful working qualities instead, which will make a decent man of him. If you don't do this, sir, you're not doing your duty by this man, let you hurl as many of your millions as you like at him under the name of education. If you taught him how to eat and drink, how to clothe himself, how to treat himself when he's ill and what time to put himself to bed at night, instead of stuffing all these 'ologies into his poor dazed brain, he would have reason to be grateful to you with all his heart and soul, which he hasn't now, for you've begun at the wrong end and what you give, is of no use to him.

"Of course a small allowance would have to be given to any man under supervision out of his wages for his clothes, but you've no idea how little, even the most prosperous of working men spend on their clothes when once they're married, or when once their two-and-twentieth year is past. I've heard say that in America no hand-worker keeps on his work-stained suit, an hour after he's struck work for the day. The principle of that is good, it's excellent, and I should be glad to see it a practice over here. Nothing tends to make a chap spend his long idle evening in a shiftless useless way, as keeping on his working clothes when he's done working. If he's got any pride in him, yes, or even any vanity so far as that goes, he doesn't care to go into the library, nor to hear the music in the concert-room, nor for a stroll in the parks, nor even to a decent pub, because he knows he'd look different from the

rest. So all he does is to loaf at the corner of the back street. In this way he misses all the pleasure he might have in his free hours just because he didn't take the trouble to have a wash and a change when he came in. Then if a man has been loafing all evening at the bar of a low pub, he gets sulky and quarrelsome, just because he's bored and tired of himself, and when he's got to that stage, he's gone a long way towards beating his wife and knocking the furniture to pieces when he gets home, I needn't tell you that, sir.

"Then I should allow my clients a little weekly pocket-money out of their wages, just the merest trifle, for you see, sir, my plan is to mean both prevention and cure, and if things are made too easy for my man, the cure won't work. He should be limited to the price of a half-a-pint of beer for his dinner, and his pocket-money would serve to get him a little more at night and some baccy, but not much of either. The abstention, among other things, would do him a world of good, and he'd come out of his year a healthier, yes, and a happier man than he'd gone into it. His pride would have had a bit of a blow I daresay, but it would soon recover. I should rely more than anything on that check on the beer and baccy. The men would be just scared at that. I don't think we should have more than one in a hundred back on our hands a second time, if they were put to that test. In that way, you'd almost put an end to the unemployed question at a blow, and without a penny added to the burden on the ratepayers either.

"One of the first things you'd have to teach this man, is that his earnings of the year, must be spread out for the spendings of the year.

"If he's under me, a builder, he might be earning his three pounds a week, including overtime, between Easter and August, while in December and January he'd be earning just nothing at all, except what I put in his way out of charity, or to keep a hold on him till I want him again, which I won't hide from you it's my interest to do at

times. It's not always the poor chap's own fault that he's unthrifty. No one has ever told him that if he earns five and thirty shillings this week and spends five and thirty, though he only needs to spend five and twenty, he's laying up a store of rue and wormwood for himself for the time when he's only earning fifteen shillings and can't live on it.

"Just make it a personal case, sir, suppose you'd a son of your own who was making a tidy weekly income all the summer, but knew that directly the frost came, there'd be a frost in his fortunes. Now if he were spending all he earned as it came in, wouldn't you be thankful if someone would take him in hand without bringing him to open shame and disgrace. Why you'd be thankful all your life for such interference, and these men need supervision, just as much as your son would in such a case as that.

"The curse of the working man in this country, after drink and early marriages, and so on, is that he's never been taught that there's no necessity for him to spend this week, everything that he has earned this week. He thinks that the money that was given him on Saturday is all meant to be spent before next Saturday.

"We've preached to him from that text for a good many years, but as preaching and kindly advice have failed, we must just make some practical examples for the good of the rest. You never have worked any reform, and never will, till you've separated the sheep from the goats.

"Yes, I've the evidence of the Savings Banks against me, as you say, and the savings of the working-classes in them are going up every year. I know all about the Savings Banks, but I know a good deal about the working man, too. I know, and most other people know, that there's not one in a hundred of him as ever patronises the Savings Banks at all, and there's not one in a hundred as puts in a shilling that mightn't put in a crown, if he liked.

"The effect of the supervision on the rising generation would be wonderful, of that I'm sure. There wouldn't be one among the growing lads but would be planning and scheming how he'd avoid that inspection when he was a man. They'd just be scared out of their lives at the possibility of it happening to themselves. Their own earnings spent for them, their beer and baccy beyond their own control, their rent and the shops paid when the money was due, instead of waiting till the landlord's and tradesmen's patience was worn out! Why, sir, you'd reform the whole country through the tyranny of a fear such as that.

"You've no idea how many shiftless, feckless creatures you'd convert into steady working men and lads, by the mere threat of interference such as I've described. You'd only be driven to carry it out in a case here and there after the first few years, for when they'd had a taste of my twelve months' supervision, you may be sure they'd do their level best to have no more.

"It's treating them like children, you say. Well, sir, the sooner you recognise the fact that the particular section of the working-classes I'm speaking of now, are like children, the better it will be for them, and you, too. I'm speaking, you remember, of those who won't work and won't learn by experience, and won't recognise their duty to themselves and their families, all of which makes them only just one remove from the mentally degenerate. They are like children; they want even teaching how to feed themselves and make themselves fit for their life and their work, and they want leading and training till they've been taught how to go alone. Once teach them that, and you can leave them to go alone.

"You'd call this interfering with the liberty of the subject, and of course I can't help you there; but directly a man shows that he's capable of managing his own affairs himself, there'd be no more interference; and having had

experience of what your interference was like one year, he'd make a pretty tough struggle before he invited it a second time.

"And if you were compelled to resort to interference, who'd blame you for it? Even the Social Agitators would have to admit that the man had brought it on himself, for if he didn't apply for relief and range himself openly along with the unemployed, you'd have no power to meddle with him.

"You'd have the employers, small and great, with you to a man. You'd have the better class of artisans with you to a man, for they'd know your interference wouldn't touch them, and it would relieve them of an incubus that's spoil the trade.

"You'd have everyone with you who was troubled with a shiftless or worthless son or brother, for such are a drain on the purse and a smirch on the good name of those below you, as well as on yourselves, sir. And you'd have everyone with you who cared about the women, poor souls, and how men like you and me and the rest, sir, can go about the world with those poor luckless women before their eyes and not care, I don't know. There's many of them, year in year out, who never have a penny to spend on themselves, never have an hour of change or amusement, never have a bit of comfort in illness, and, through the rent and the tradesmen's bills being always in arrears, they never know from day to day, how long they'll have a crust to give the children or a roof over their heads. Yet all the while their husbands, when they're in full work with overtime, are spending anything from five to twenty-five shillings a week on drink and smoke and betting and lending to friends. If you'd no other call to take things up in this way, I say the women ought to be enough.

"You can see how it is with them just by the look in their poor wan faces and their worn, wasted bodies as you see them going about the town. Of course some of them

are masterful, and can look after themselves ; and some have good husbands, you can see that at a glance, too, by the look in their faces. Still, with most of them, it is as I say, and my manager, who sees more of them than I do, when they steal up to the office to ask what they're to do when they can't get any money out of the husband, he says just what I do, but more of it.

"You see in the working-classes, till a girl marries, she has a very good time, her own wage and her own way, plenty of pleasure and plenty of freedom, perhaps rather more than is good for her. Then she marries and—well, no, the subject is too big to go into here—but if you're called on to give advice, and a good few of them come in secret to the husbands' employers for advice, you just don't know whether it's better to tell them to find work outside and earn wages for themselves, or to stick to the home and be content with what the husband chooses to bring them, which is often just nothing at all. It's a choice of evils, and each evil is worse than the other, as our friends, the Irish, might say.

"Speaking of spending all you've got, as soon as you've got it, there's the case of Walsall ; you'll never get one that's more to the point. Up to the time of the Boer War, Walsall was a town of fair average prosperity, a one-trade town, every man, woman, and child in it being engaged in the saddlery industry, except those that were providing for the wants and wishes of those in the saddlery.

"Well, Walsall had quite as much money as was good for it before, but when the war broke out, big orders came both from the War Office and from every private concern in the Kingdom. These orders came faster and faster, till the firms couldn't book them quick enough, let alone carry them out, and the employers of labour were forced to pay just whatever they were asked, so as to get their contracts carried out. Men, yes, and women and children, too,

were working day and night, and the amount of overtime done was almost incredible. The wages paid on Saturday night were almost incredible, too.

"There were single families who were drawing £10 or £12 among them on pay-day, for one week's wages, and one leading manufacturer used to show his friends his books with the names of girls of nineteen and twenty, who were each earning three and four pounds a week. There were hundreds who, during the time the war lasted, earned sums on which they might have retired or bought some little business that would have kept them for life, but, if you'll believe me, sir, those Walsall men and women, almost without exception, spent all they earned as it came in. The money flung away on eating and drinking would have surprised the Hotel Cecil. The places of amusement flourished as they never had before, and the people spent just for spending's sake. They'd go to one place for an hour and straight on to another, before the first entertainment was over. They'd order a dinner at one restaurant, leave it half eaten and go and order another elsewhere, which they'd treat in the same way. They'd buy furniture and find their houses were so full, they couldn't get it in the doors, and the number of pianos bought was a thing to wonder at. The young women would send up to London for guinea hats and three-guinea costumes, and the young men would leave that golden employment behind them, and go up to London on the spree, for a week at a time. Money counted for nothing and was just littered about the streets.

"Then came the reaction. Peace was declared, no more Army equipment was wanted, orders at a full stop, and the employers of course dismissed all the hands they could. Then, would you believe it, sir, three months later, there didn't seem to be a sixpence in the town? Everything had been spent that there was to spend. Half the things bought were on the instalment system and only partly

paid for. The men and women of the town were just scared. They were like frightened children. They looked at each other when they met in the streets and just didn't know what to say. They went about with grey haggard faces and eyes like dull glass and half stupid with hunger, for, of course, the man who's been over-eating and over-indulging himself generally, shows the signs of privation sooner than another. When more and more got turned off, they tried to make the rest strike, but those in work just dared not. They knew the employers would have been only too glad, some of them, to shut up their works and lie low for a time, till the stock on hand was cleared off and a normal condition prevailed again.

"Well, as I said before, the state of things was what you can't describe. The three-guinea dresses went to the old-clothes woman ; the new pianos were sold by auction for a few pounds ; the handsome furniture from London was offered to the dealers, who wouldn't look at it. Of course that was just the moment when the landlords, who before had been careless about the rent, knowing there was plenty of money about, began to press for arrears, and those who'd been flinging their sovereigns about right and left six months before, were turned out into the streets.

"Even the employers, who knew the sort of men they had to deal with, were aghast. 'We just don't know where the money's gone to,' they said. 'They've had it ; they can't have spent it, but they haven't got it. That's all we know.'

"Before many more weeks had passed, the workhouses were full, the old folks of course being sent there first, and relief-works were being set up all over the place. Christmas came on, and the distress was terrible.

"And that was Walsall, that was Walsall ! And I challenge you to name a town in the country where under the same conditions, it wouldn't have been much the same."

XXX

“SHE DID ASTONISHING THINGS AT ASTONISHING TIMES IN ASTONISHING WAYS”

THE antagonism of certain sections of the East to the West, leaps out at times in a manner which is startling to behold.

Take a recent case. A certain Miss West, having her own small income and being without domestic ties, decided to devote her life to that East, whither her wishes had gone long before.

Miss West was comely of face, slim of form, dainty of appearance, and most eager, most ardent, most fervent in the pursuit of her ideals.

She undertook the management of those institutions which are best managed by a woman, in a poor parish in the East End, and because her mind and heart and life and soul were thrown into the work, her power grew and her success was wonderful.

She lived among the people and made herself one with them. She laboured night and day for their welfare, and she worked with her intellect as well as with her affections, so her results soon seemed good to all who looked on.

Her quick fancy found new ways for brightening the lives of those around her. Her vivid imagination devised

new ways of electrifying the old ways. She did astonishing things at astonishing hours in astonishing places.

If ever you go to live in the East, these things will need no written description for you. They will be all in the day's work, be spread abroad before all who have eyes to see.

So long as you continue to live in the West, they cannot be written down for you, for the words that describe them are not always seemly.

Suffice to say that when there was no special steam on, Miss West taught and talked, and tended and trained. For the rest, that she did and how she did it, is it not written in the unwritten record of hundreds and of thousands who have done more or less as she?

One would have thought that the chivalrous protection of every man in that parish, the tender devotion of every woman, the loving adoration of every child, were waiting before Miss West's pretty feet, for the moment when she might choose to stoop to pick them up.

So far the little homily. Now for its sequel.

Miss West, as was her wont, held a Mothers' Meeting once a week. Each mother laid a penny on the table as she came in. This gave her the right to sit, her needle-work in her hand, for a couple of hours on a comfortable bench with a back to it, in a room with a roaring fire in winter, and with cool green blinds drawn across the windows in summer, and with a rug for her babies to crawl about on over the floor.

Meanwhile Miss West read and talked and sang to her, showing her in the intervals how to cut out Baby's bib and patch Peter's knickers, and mend Mary's jacket.

Often, for Miss West's influence was far-reaching, and she was persistent in the interests of her clients, often a visitor of high degree would come to read and talk and to sing to the mothers by way of variety.

I never heard that any princess of the blood attended

those meetings, but short of that, I believe every rank sent a representative in turn.

However, that is by the way.

Now one day, this meeting was larger than usual. Mothers were many, and the piles of pence on the table grew high.

Miss West sat behind the board, entering names in her book and shooting bright glances across the room at intervals towards the High Degree she had captured for this week's entertainment.

Suddenly Evil entered in the form of a small unkempt and most unprepossessing boy of twelve or thirteen years of age.

As a rule, mothers only came on these occasions, but there was no law that this should be so. A policy of open door was maintained, and if Miss West gave the urchin a thought at all, it was to tell herself that he would, perhaps, seeing how pleasant and cheery all was within, send his own mother to a meeting later on.

Far from the ragamuffin, this intent. Artfully he took a seat near the table, lazily he turned his eyes on the assembly, and cleverly he schooled his expression to express nothing at all.

Presently Miss West turned one neat little shoulder towards the boy, as she bent backwards to smile at a fat atom of humanity who had crept off the rug and entangled himself among the legs of her chair.

Then Evil seized his chance. His claws darted out, his talons closed round the money, his flying heels overturned a chair that it might impede pursuit, and away through the doorway and down the street he went.

Not a moment did Miss West lose. Swifter than thought, she was up and away, and reached the street just in time to see the lad turn into the court at its lower end.

Down one alley, up another, round the corner, across the square and out into the wider road where the costers have

their barrows, flew the plucky little lady, who was swift of foot and light of build, her skirts caught high over her slender ankles, the urchin dropping pence before her as he ran, though Atalanta stopped not for them.

Customer and costermonger, not one of the crowd into which she now made her rapid way, but knew Miss West.

Here was one with the cuffs she had knitted on his rough red wrists. There was one she had nursed when he was down with an attack of rheumatism or an attack of the other thing. Here another whose wife——; but, no, I prefer to forbear.

For an instant they all stared, wondering what was up. Then, with the quick apprehension of the East for such scenes, they began to act.

One struck up the girl's wrist as her hand was laid on the young miscreant's shoulder; a second caught the boy and gave him a swing onward to place him beyond her reach; a third hitched round his barrow to bar her way; a fourth aimed a cabbage at her from the pile on his board; a fifth stuck out a heavy boot in an attempt to trip her up as she passed.

Loudly they all laughed, men and women alike, cheering for the pursued, jeering at the pursuer.

Not for that did the girl pause. She neither winced nor flinched, though hit by more missiles than one. Her breath came in sobs, her hat flew from her little fair head, her eyes were blinded by a tress of loosened hair, her foot caught in the dangling ribbon of her shoe.

At last she stumbled and fell over some new impediment placed in her path. As she did so, a strong blue arm caught her up and made her safe, while the voice of the Bobby, heard so rarely in these quarters, demanded in kindly gruffness, "What's he been a-doing of, Miss?"

Too far gone to speak, the little heroine could only gasp and point her finger at the culprit, whose ear was comfort-

ably secured between the policeman's finger and thumb, for victory had come to Miss West in the moment of defeat, the boy having precipitated himself into the policeman's arms as he rounded his last corner.

For a few minutes things looked bad both for the Bobby and Miss West.

The costers' barrows were forgotten, except by a few little foxes who seized the opportunity of devouring some grapes gratis.

Around the three central figures on the pavement, surged a howling mob, reinforced every moment from the side streets and the houses around.

The costers had entered the fray in fun at the beginning, but things now threatened to turn to perilous earnest, and the arm that had been thrown round Miss West's slight form, had to work hard to protect both her and its owner.

Various mothers who had witnessed the initial act of the drama, and who had now made their portly way to the scene of action, began to explain elaborately what had happened. Strangely enough, however, their sympathies, too, seemed to go with the robber rather than the robbed.

But no explanation was of interest to the costers.

"She shan't charge 'im——"

"Let 'im go."

"What's a few browns?"

"What are *you* a doin' of 'ere?"

This last, in tones of surprised indignation to the Man of the Law, who often has the question addressed to him in these quarters. And, of course, each phrase was begun, ended, and middled with the Red Word of the East.

The policeman won at last, for he managed to wrench his whistle out of the brawny fist of the ruffian whose first act had, of course, been to get hold of it, and thus summoning others to his aid.

In the last act, Miss West was to be seen on her way

home, installed for safety in a four-wheeler, with three stalwart policemen to either side, while before, behind, to right, to left, trooped the costers and their kind, giving vent to their opinions on the matter, in language which was equally striking from its picturesqueness and its originality.

P.S.—Miss West's friends considered that, for reasons it would be better she should not charge the boy.

As she was a plucky little woman, and a slave to her conscience, she refused to listen to this advice, saying that it would be cowardice on her part to avoid a manifest duty, and that for the good of the whole East End, an example ought to be made.

She noticed, however, to her infinite annoyance, that her residence, which was within a stone's throw of the Mission House, was being closely though unostentatiously watched by police-officers in plain clothes, and that when she left home, she was constantly shadowed by a discreet detective.

Hooligans, singly and in groups, criminals in the making, were evidently aware of this, too, as they would glare at her from dark corners, then slink away with an oath and threats of dark deeds in future, on finding themselves under surveillance.

Occasionally some person, a woman or a child even, at times, would dart from some alley and declare that Miss West should be "outed" if she dared to proceed further in the matter of the stolen coppers.

The morning after the event took place, a packet was left on her doorstep, with the legend, "Frum a Frende," scrawled on its outer cover. On opening it, she found within a policeman's whistle and a small life-preserver.

Finally, a very high official called privately at her modest apartment, and in parental accents, begged her to give up all idea of prosecution.

"If you don't see your way to this, my dear young lady," he said, "you won't be able to remain here, for your life won't be safe. You have been some time in the East End, and you know what I say is no exaggeration. You are running a great risk yourself, you are giving a great deal of trouble to the police, and you are keeping the whole neighbourhood in a ferment. You must give the thing up, and announce the fact publicly in your Mission Room or elsewhere. Put it anyway you think proper, but make it quite clear that you have given it up.

On this, of course, Miss West was reluctantly compelled to consent.

P.P.S.—The day after the Public Recantation had been made, as Miss West crossed her doorstep at dusk, a grimy hand was thrust out before her.

"We meant no 'arm, miss. It's just our way! 'Ere's some apples."

Poor East! Perhaps he did mean no 'arm after all.

But it was small thanks to him, that little Miss West came to no permanent harm when she flew from her Mothers' Meeting to the sheltering arms of the Policeman that day.

Envoi.—To the Reader. The whole of this incident is fact, literal, hard, bald, unvarnished fact, with the exception of half-a-dozen lines.

Query: Which are the half-a-dozen lines in question?

XXXI

“SUCH IS EAST”

Such is East, who, with all his faults, is a fine fellow. Who has, moreover, the chance of becoming the finest fellow in the world.

Let him see to it that he takes that chance.

Let us see to it that we more persistently offer him that chance.

It is always a hard case when suffering and judgment walk hand in hand, when the hour of pain is also the hour of condemnation.

At the present moment, when destitution is abroad, to point out the faults of the Easts, seems callous and cruel in the extreme. But that destitution need not be ignored, because the lifelong habit which led up to it is deplored.

The truest benefactors of the working-man of the day, are not they who relieve his momentary distress, but such as may be able to turn his eyes upon those danger-signals which have been held out to check men on the downward path, from the time the world began.

The writers of the Great Book warned those of their day that as men sowed, so must they reap. Old Æsop gave his own quaint admonition in the form of the fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper, who devoted his long summer days to song alone. The homely sage of our own

time, exhorts his listeners to bear in mind that as they make their bed so must they lie on it.

In order that we may perform our part in giving the working-man his chance, we must draw nearer to him. We must not, as heretofore, allow his worst foe, the social agitator, alone to have access to his ear, that agitator who is most dangerous because he lives on the sedition he excites. If he will not listen to our sermons, we must get him to listen to our small talk. If there be a leader among the men who will not come to the Institutes we have built for him, we must grant him admission now and again to our library, and sue in return, for an occasional invitation to his club-room.

We must drop a word in season in the railway-carriage, as the Methodist drops his tract, and esteem ourselves fortunate that the spoken word is not so easily ignored as the written line.

We are often sealed up in that carriage for hours at a time, with some fine specimen of the working-man, and if diplomatically approached he will, for the most part, prove accessible, while the quaint retort, the new clothing of the old idea, the unexpected light thrown on a familiar topic, will repay any trouble that may have been taken.

And it is satisfactory to remember that when his contradictions to our words are most emphatic, he is at that very moment, resolving to repeat the arguments as his own at the next meeting of his club.

Amateur assistance has been at a discount of late in the East End, the real craftsmen finding it only impedes progress, but West will always find some way of helping on the Great Work if he be disposed.

Let him, however, promptly eschew the assistance that is understood by indiscriminate street-giving, and do his best towards establishing a healthy general public opinion on the matter.

When that is done, it will be considered as reprehensible

to hand over coin without inquiring as to the necessities and the deserts of the recipient, as it would now be to give a leg-up to the burglar whom we find by chance climbing the garden-wall, with the contents of a safe or a jewel-case tucked away under his arm.

There is only a certain amount to be given away. Therefore the charitable should look on that portion of their means with which they are able and willing to dispense, as the property of the nation, or of their God, as they prefer.

In any case, let them consider it as trust-money, which must not be merely paid out in order that they may walk away with the warm and cheering feeling of having done good.

The paralytic at the Bank has many brothers. The gaunt-faced fraud who haunts the doorsteps of Belgrave Square, having learnt the hours when the tender-hearted young girl will come out for her morning stroll, is one of a large family. Let us not wait till the magistrate has pointed his finger at each in turn.

When we realise that each shilling given to him who needs it not, is stolen from the coffers of the deserving, we shall look on this, as on other forms of theft, as a crime.

It is naturally far pleasanter to break up a five shilling piece and scatter it in sixpences about one's path, than to send it, for instance, to the Albert Orphan Asylum at Bagshot, where certain blighted beings are being trained into useful citizens at a cost of under £25 a year a head, or to the Cripples' Home, in Kensington, where, with diseased limb removed and twisted fingers trained to a welcome trade, the former outcast finds that even for him, the glorious sun can shine and the day contains some joy.

Send your sixpence where you will, so that it be to one of those institutions founded for the training of the young, or for the amelioration of the lot of the physically afflicted.

The street loafer will suffer from your change of attitude, but it is better that he should content himself with one instead of two quarts of beer, than that some hapless incurable should languish in a wretched garret without any of the alleviations which Providence has handed to science in his behalf.

Support these organised charities, especially such as have an accredited accountant who can be proved to have no direct financial interest in the charity, beyond the amount of his own salary. Support them with all your might and main, and the more ignorant, or the more indolent, you are in regard to your stricken neighbour, the more assiduously must you support such associations as have been founded by those who have the knowledge and the diligence in seeking out dark places, which are lacking in yourself.

If this be too hard, if you feel you must seek individual interest and work for results visible for yourself, for it takes all sorts to make a world, and with some, things run thus, then select your own client from among those who lack fortune's favours and fit him yourself for the battle of life.

After all, if each were the tutelary genius of one other, the ills of the world would be materially decreased.

But foremost and first, give your sympathies where they are deserved. Place your gifts where they are due. Turn your back, as you would on the plague, to that plague-spot on our civilisation, the canting scoundrel who goes down the street with the words of a sublime hymn on his desecrating lips, or give him your sixpence if you must, but while giving, remember that you are thus robbing of that sixpence the blind, the halt, and the dumb.

It can never be too often repeated that there are not sufficient sixpences to go round, and if you, whether your name be County Council or Poor-Law Guardian, or merely Private Individual, give your sixpences to the unworthy,

you, in your own vile person, and with your own evil hand, have committed the crime of snatching the crutch from the grasp of the cripple, the bandage from the shattered limb of the street-urchin, the crust from the lips of the starving child, the salve from the breast of the poor wretch dying of cancer.

These are hard words, be they writ by whom they may, but there is a trite phrase to the effect that more evil is wrought by want of heart than want of thought. If then, the heart be in fault, it must be stabbed and wrung till it too mends its ways.

Fifty thousand pounds represented the sixpences of the County Council when they lately decided to erect the Drury Lane lodging-house, without first consulting those who would have reminded them, since reminder was needed, that a hundred yards away, there stood already another lodging-house, likewise controlled by the County Council, where an average of fifty beds per night had remained empty during the previous six months.

The secretary of the Charity Organisation Society, quoted by Lord Avebury at the London Institution, when pronouncing on the misapplication of the sixpences under his ken, declared that the multiplication of cheap lodging-houses, "propagated instead of reducing, vagrancy, vice, and crime."

Thus, if that secretary be right, and who more fitted to pronounce on the matter than he, if he be right, a sum of fifty thousand pounds, has been dedicated to the direct increase of evil, and for want of that fifty thousand pounds, the doors of the hospitals are closed on those in suffering and pain, the homeless orphan is shut out from that refuge where he might have been taught to play his part as well as any of us, in the creating of the world anew.

There is none too much pity in the world, and if you have any to spare from the physically stricken, give it to

the fine old veteran covered with life's scars, who in his youth and prime, paid his own hard-earned coin for his children's schooling and holidays in the country, and who kept his grey-headed parents by his own fireside, till they went to their last home.

Give it to him, for he needs it, since having first bravely struggled that his own little ones might be well taught and trained, he must in later life meet demands made on him for the schooling and the country-visits of the children of the wealthy publican, the high class tradesman, who combine in their thousands to filch his honourable savings from him, and in consequence of having had to bear this double burden, that gallant greybeard has now himself sunk into an impoverished and comfortless old age.

And if you have yet more compassion, aye and honour and reverence to dispense along with it, give it to those, the worthiest of us all, who by strenuous endeavour and by the combined effort of parent and child, not during one brief lifetime, but for generations, have raised themselves honourably, painfully, to good position, those whom we have now savagely thrust down in order that we may hoist up in their place others who are unfitted by nature, by inclination, and by hereditary instinct, for the position we have forced upon them, a position they have themselves neither desired nor deserved.

Let us see to it that we do these, with things similar, that we may not have to go on to the end of time, crying out as we look around on our own handiwork :

"Lord ! what fools we mortals be !"

THE END.

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